Theorising occupational decision making:

A longitudinal study of hospitality training in schools

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Declaration of Originality

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Abstract

The transition from student to worker is one of great significance. Decisions made about occupation can determine future career trajectories and, by extension, access to or denial of societal privilege, occupational status attainment and social identity. Partly in response to this, it is becoming increasingly common for individuals to have exposure to workplaces by undertaking a period of vocational education and training (VET) whilst in the latter stages of secondary school. This research uses such a transitional period to examine occupational decision making of students undertaking a hospitality vocational course in Tasmania, Australia. Globally, the hospitality sector experiences pressing problem of skills and labour shortages and therefore there is a need to investigate the reasons why individuals choose to enter and remain in hospitality occupations.

This thesis links two well-established career decision-making theories to identify a more appropriate means to examine the elongated period of occupational decision making through vocational education and training. This non-traditional approach to occupational decision making is not well reflected in the career literature or by existing models of career decision making. Using a mixed method approach, this longitudinal study examines the occupational decision-making processes of students from different backgrounds. Their stories reveal a holistic picture of the impacts of family influence, socioeconomic background and interests on an initial decision to enter training as preparation for an occupation in hospitality. The longitudinal method allows further investigation of the assessment of that initial occupational decision for suitability during the VET course and into early career.

This research has found that socioeconomic background, parental occupation and interest will narrow the range of occupational choices perceived to be available to individuals as described in Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. However, it was found that assumptions of individual agency and rational decision making were curtailed by the perception of limited occupational options underpinned by fundamental social structures such as social class and occupational status. Early career decision making was found to depend largely on the relative strength of goals, expectation of outcomes and sense of self-efficacy as described in Lent, Brown and Hackett's (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory. Decisions were not formally rational given the limits of their research into occupations and the

limitations to thinking created by social structures. This research also identifies the role of workplace relationships as an explicit and powerful moderator of turnover intention in early hospitality career.

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Most of all, however, special recognition is due to all the hospitality VET students and their teachers who gave of their time over an extended period; without them, there simply would be no thesis.

And to Bruce Barton, who will never know how much one quote can keep a girl going; thanks for providing the underlying mantra of my existence over the past five years.

"Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance."

Chapter One

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 *Introduction*

The objective of this chapter is to introduce this thesis. The chapter commences with a discussion of the rationale for this thesis. Next, the context of the research is presented and broad research opportunity is noted and briefly discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 *Rationale for this research*

Whilst much has been written about career choice from different theoretical perspectives (Patton & Creed,2007), there is a paucity of contemporary research that has focused specifically on the way in which occupational choices are made and evaluated during the individual's shift from being a child, to student, to employee, from a holistic perspective – that is, the manner in which people make decisions about their future work given their social background, gender, interests and other social variables over an extended period of time. Two prominent theories that deal with occupational choice are Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1981), and Lent, Brown and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994).

Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise describes a process by which individuals develop a range of occupational aspirations from pre-school years through to adolescence. This process occurs in concert with the development of an individual's understanding of the world and their place in it, and takes into consideration the roles of gender, social class and personal interests. It is a theory that identifies that both personal psychological development and external factors, such as socioeconomic background, have an impact on an individual's occupational choice. Whilst the Theory of Circumscription and

Compromise has utility in identifying how individuals come to make an initial occupational choice at the end of their school career, it has little efficacy in investigating the later processes of assessing that choice for suitability once in the workplace (Gottfredson, 2002). A second mechanism is therefore required to investigate the phenomenon of initial occupational choice assessment in early career.

The impact of the work environment can be taken into consideration through the use of Lent et al.'s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory. This theory identifies that a range of factors interact to present the individual with a rationale for occupational decision making[1]. Specifically, the interplay between self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectations determines the individual's perception of an occupation as desirable or not, and therefore provides impetus for decision making. Social Cognitive Career Theory is particularly important to the occupational decision-making processes during the early stages of an individual's hospitality career.

The stages of occupational decision making are now more complex due to the prevalence of school-based vocational courses, common in the OECD (OECD, 2010). Whilst the existing theories provide well for the investigation of transitions from student to worker where a definite status shift occurs, they do not adequately provide for a more contemporary occupational decision-making process that occurs over a longer period of time. Vocational education and training (VET) provides the individual with a „preview' of work and an elongated decision-making period during the last years of schooling (Anlezark, Karmel &

[1] The literature variously uses terms such as career decision making and occupational decision making to describe the choices people make regarding the occupations they choose to enter. This thesis uses occupational decision making as a consistent term in reference to this phenomenon. Career choice is used to refer to the entirety of the individual's working life.

Ong, 2006). Therefore, the process of moving from student to worker is less of a definite point-in-time shift than if the individual had left school and started work in a chosen occupation. This offers the individual an opportunity to experience the hospitality workplace and their chosen occupation without actually making the final decision to enter that occupation (Anlezark et al., 2006).

Drawing together the two distinct theoretical constructs, this research aims to investigate occupational decision-making processes of students undertaking hospitality VET, a common form of vocational education provided in the latter years of secondary education. This investigation takes into account their journey from childhood, the initial point of making a decision to enter a hospitality occupation, and their early working experiences. From a theoretical perspective this presents an opportunity to investigate the best way to consolidate the two theoretical approaches to early career decision making. Whilst these theories are presented in the literature independent of each other, this research investigates how they can be best used together, and the best way they can be brought together.

The two theories therefore offer the promise that they can be used in tandem to form a more comprehensive model to identify how individuals come to decide on and remain in an occupation. This project focuses on hospitality occupations and investigates the importance of background factors developed through social learning during primary and secondary socialisation (the pre-school and schooling period) such as social class and interest (Gottfredson, 1981). The research then investigates how those factors overlap with new social learning and skills development during the hospitality VET course and exposure to the hospitality workplace and the chosen occupation. Social Cognitive Career Theory then provides a framework for investigating how factors such as self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation influence the individual's assessment of occupational choice. Once the

individual has made the transition from student to hospitality employee, assessment of the suitability of the occupation continues (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Progression from student to hospitality worker via hospitality VET

1.3 *Context of this research*

The research will focus on hospitality VET courses in the regional economy of Tasmania, Australia. Given that the hospitality industry globally has been facing skills and labour shortages for some time, it is suggested that this is a sector in need of research to underpin pressing human resources issues such as labour shortages (TCCI, 2010). Countries as diverse as Ireland and Spain, Macau and Canada have all recently experienced a lack of skilled labour and are failing to attract appropriate people willing to be trained for hospitality jobs (Choi, Woods & Murrmann, 2000; Devine, Baum, Hearns & Devine, 2007). In regional economies such as Tasmania, Australia, these constraints and challenges are more pronounced due to characteristics such as limited labour pools, migration away from regional areas and competition from other industries (Skills Tasmania, 2008). This renders this island state an ideal case location for this research.

There is significant theoretical value and important practical benefit in exploring the topic of career decision making in hospitality VET students. The area is under-theorised given that much of the research comes from an investigation of workplace or sector deficiency; that is, investigating reasons why people leave the industry (Barron & Maxwell, 1993; Jenkins, 2001). Developing an understanding of the occupational motivations of new entrants to hospitality occupations, especially in the context of pressing environmental factors in the sector, will enable the development of better ways to attract, train and retain staff. This is particularly important given the potentially debilitating ramifications of not addressing the prevailing issues in economies that rely heavily on hospitality and/or where labour is scarce and a skilled workforce is imperative to business profitability.

1.3.1 The Tasmanian hospitality sector

Tasmania, Australia, is a regional economy with a highly decentralised population of 507,600 people (ABS, 2010; TCCI, 2010). The state has a workforce that is ageing more rapidly than other Australian states (DCAC, 2007) and has the lowest labour force participation rate of all states in the country (TCCI, 2010). Skills and labour shortages are identified as factors of concern in regard to business growth and productivity (TCCI, 2010). However, the Tasmanian tourism and hospitality industry is a significant contributor to the state's economy and is a major employer (Skills Tasmania, 2008). Coupled with tourism, the industry provides direct employment for approximately 6.1 per cent of the state's workforce (in comparison to 4.7 per cent nationally). The industry accounts for around 8.5 per cent of Gross State Product both directly and indirectly (TICT, 2009) and the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania suggests that it is "the most tourism intensive state in Australia" (TICT, 2009:3). It is a highly labour intensive industry of around 2400 businesses which are

predominantly small to medium sized and micro enterprises (Skills Tasmania, 2008; TTF, 2009).

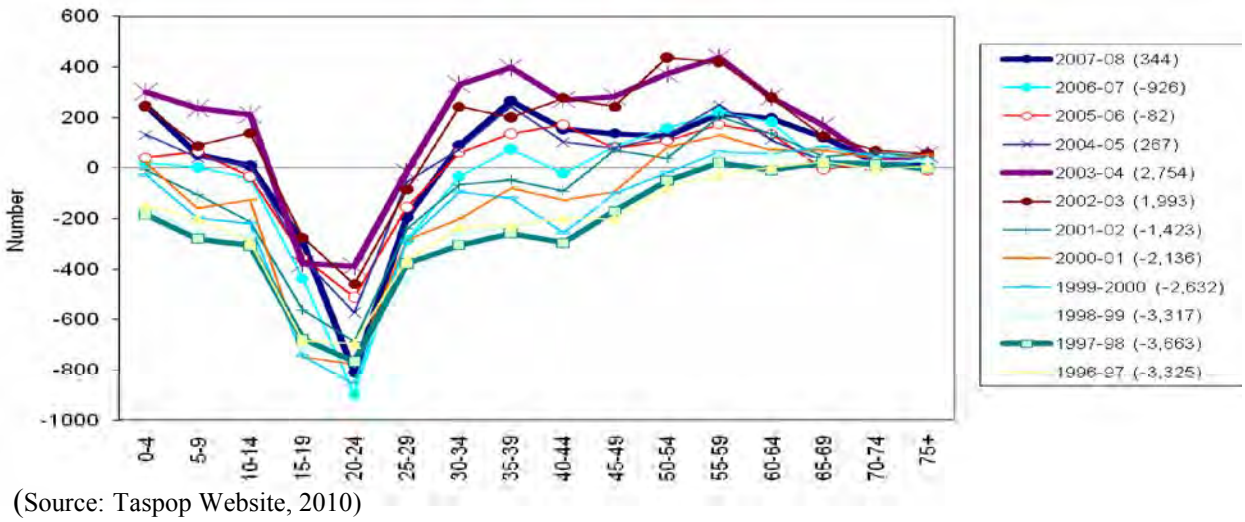
The hospitality sector is a major part of the tourism industry, but has, for several years, experienced difficulty in attracting and retaining staff (Skills Tasmania, 2008; TICT, 2009). This is due to a range of factors such as growth of employment in other attractive industries, a perception of inflexible and unappealing working conditions in hospitality, and highly seasonal work patterns (Skills Tasmania, 2008). Industry operators have reported significant difficulty in finding appropriate staff particularly in regional areas of Tasmania (Skills Tasmania, 2008). Labour turnover is characteristic of this sector in Australia too. With a national estimated annual turnover rate of 51 per cent for operational employees and 39 per cent for managerial staff (TTF, 2006), labour turnover in this industry is higher than for any other industry (LHMU, 2008). The Tasmanian hospitality and tourism industry reports labour turnover rates of between 20 per cent and 100 per cent (Skills Tasmania, 2008), and is a highly seasonal employer.

Peak bodies and industry operators in Tasmania have indicated that the issue is not only related to labour shortages but skills shortages too (Skills Tasmania, 2008). However, vocational training in hospitality-related courses in Tasmania is not in short supply. Statistics indicate that there were over 25,409 enrolments in some form of publicly funded hospitality training in Tasmania in the five year period 2002–2006 (Skills Tasmania, 2008). To put this into context, the estimated total population of people directly and indirectly employed in the Tasmanian tourism and hospitality industry is around 23,000 (Skills Tasmania, 2008). Therefore, in the five years identified (assuming one person per enrolment), more people participated in some form of hospitality training than the total labour force of the tourism and hospitality industry. This is only indicative of the public training effort; the private training

effort for the same period is considerable but unquantified. The question has to be asked, then: if there is no shortage of people undertaking training for hospitality occupations, why does the industry continue to report difficulties in finding staff? This anomaly might be explained by the fact that a high proportion of people fail to complete training in hospitality. The estimated completion rate of hospitality qualifications is around 30 per cent (Skills Tasmania, 2008). Also, people may not continue into a hospitality occupation after training, or people leave their hospitality occupation within a short period once they have entered the sector (Baron & Maxwell, 1993; Varoglu & Eser, 2006; Waryszac, 2002). This is consistent with identified high labour turnover rates.

More generally, Tasmania is a regional economy with demographic and workforce challenges such as an ageing population and ageing workforce (DCAC, 2007; Jackson, 2002). These factors also impact heavily on availability of labour in the hospitality workforce as Tasmania traditionally experiences a significant migration of people out of the state from the prime working ages of 15 to 35 (Taspop Website, 2010) (see Figure 2). This also is the prime age for hospitality workers (Skills Tasmania, 2008).

Figure 2. Net age profile of Tasmania's interstate migrants 1996–2008



(Source: Taspop Website, 2010)

Taking into consideration the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis and the decelerating growth experienced in the tourism and hospitality industry (Tourism Tasmania, 2010), attraction of suitable candidates to hospitality and retention of workers remain major issues. Population data suggest that the decade 2011–2020 will be characterised by negative growth in workforce entrants (Economic Policy Branch, 2010), further reducing the total labour pool. It is a significant policy issue, therefore, to determine what attracts and keeps people in a hospitality occupation once they have undertaken training, as labour turnover is not only costly to business but is unsustainable in an environment characterised by a declining labour pool (Economic Policy Branch, 2010; Jackson, 2002; Lashley, 2001; LHMU, 2008; TTF, 2006).

1.3.2 The Tasmanian senior school system – a brief overview

This research focuses on the Tasmanian secondary education system where a distinction is made between high/secondary school and secondary colleges (which incorporate Years 11 and 12 – the final two years of secondary schooling). Most students move to a different school or campus for secondary college education where the hospitality VET programs often combine both Year 11 and Year 12 students into a vocational course of study.

VET courses at senior secondary level are based on a Certificate I or Certificate II level qualification and are aligned with the Australian National Hospitality and Tourism Training Package (DEEWR, 2009). All of these courses include a number of practical on-the-job work placements in hospitality enterprises. This training package provides the competency standards under the Australian Qualifications Framework for the entire hospitality sector (DEEWR, 2009). Given the firm vocational orientation of the courses and intended industry recognition of qualifications gained, people entering into such training would be expected to

have made a firm choice to enter a hospitality sector-based occupation (e.g. hotel manager, waiter, chef). This form of training is fundamental and is often identified as a pre-vocational entry level qualification for hospitality occupations.

1.4 *Thesis outline*

Chapter Two of this thesis aims to give the reader an overview of the background literature used to form the foundation of this research. The Gottfredson Theory of Circumscription and Compromise is discussed to explain an individual's process of discovering a "zone of acceptable alternatives" (1981:548) from all occupations. A process of circumscription and compromise occurs over an individual's life from an early age to adolescence.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) is then outlined. This theory recognises the important role of background influences on individuals' career choices and lends itself to a behaviourist perspective rather than one purely based on rational decision making. The role of the family, socioeconomic background, perceived occupational status and broader primary and secondary socialisation are taken into consideration in determining the career behaviour of individuals. Constructs of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation are central to Social Cognitive Career Theory and are relevant to this research.

Other supporting literature such as the work of Bandura (1977 & 1986) which underpins Social Cognitive Career Theory in particular, is discussed, and the broader self-efficacy literature and literature supporting class (e.g. social mobility and occupational status) is examined to support the theories of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory. The research questions are introduced at the end of the literature review.

Chapter Three will describe the research methodology, illustrating a rationale as to why both qualitative and quantitative methods were used, and an introduction to the sample is provided. The research design is explained as are the methods of analysis of the data. An illustration of the research participants' experiences and stories is provided in the Findings Chapter as are the results of the quantitative data gathered to support background factors such as socioeconomic background and occupational status. A presentation of responses to the research questions based on the findings of the research is delivered in the Discussion Chapter. Here, more in-depth exploration is made of both the quantitative and qualitative data to offer support for the arguments and conclusions drawn by this research. Chapter Six identifies the theoretical contribution of a consolidated model and the practical implications in regard to broader application of the research findings to both the hospitality and VET sectors. A short conclusion completes the thesis.

1.5 *Summary*

This introduction has presented a background to this research, the context in which it was conducted and a rationale for conducting research on the phenomenon of occupational decision making in hospitality VET students. An outline of the supporting literature and theoretical framework was identified, and the structure of the thesis was provided. The following chapter will provide a review of the relevant literature.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2 Literature Review

2.1 *Introduction*

The objectives of this chapter are four-fold. Firstly, it describes the broad theoretical underpinnings of career decision making. Secondly, the chapter focuses on Bandura's (1977, 1986) work, which underpins two important theories of career decision making. Thirdly, the chapter describes the two extant career decision-making theories (namely Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Lent, Brown and Hackett's (1994) Social Cognitive Theory). Finally, the chapter presents the specific research question to be addressed in this thesis.

2.2 *Occupational decision making: an overview*

The development of career and occupational decision making has been investigated over many years, with highlights in the modern era including Holland's theory of vocational choice (1959) and Schein's theory of career anchors (1990). Issues such as person/job fit, perceived values and motives, and career lifecycle in regard to occupational choice have been widely investigated. This research focuses primarily on decision making in late adolescence and early career. It presupposes that decision making is consequent to the circumstances at a single transitional period of time where there is a transition from student to worker (Herr, 1997; Smart & Peterson, 1997; Super, 1980). However, occupational aspirations are created over a broader period of time (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000) and are therefore contingent on the external social environment, the development of self-concepts and the individual's cognitive development. That is, occupational decision making is a consolidated process of integrating both external factors, such as social background, and internal factors, such as self-efficacy (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). These factors result over time in a suite of possible

occupational alternatives for the individual and provide the basis for occupational decision making.

This thesis investigates both the external and internal antecedents to occupational decision making, specifically the decision to embark on a career in hospitality. The research focuses on Tasmanian hospitality VET students, their background, motivations and opinions during their transition from the role of student to that of worker. The theoretical background to this undertaking is now explained, starting with Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

2.3 *Background theory*

2.3.1 Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory suggests that behaviour is driven by impulses, needs and motivations from within the individual, as well as environmental factors. Bandura calls this complex interplay of factors *triadic reciprocal determinism*. This is described as an asymmetrical interplay between external, behavioural and cognitive (psychological) factors that influences future behaviour. People are not born with inbuilt repertoires of behaviour aside from natural elementary responses (e.g. flight/fight reflexes), nor is influential social heritage passed on biologically from parent to offspring (Bandura, 1977; Lindesmith, Strauss & Denzin, 1977). Rather, individuals learn behavioural responses via social interactions such as observational modelling, self-regulation and assessments of consequential outcomes (Bandura, 2004). That is, observation of the behaviour of others with whom an individual regularly associates, such as family and friends, distinguishes the types of behaviour that will be most salient to the individual and, therefore, learned most comprehensively (Bandura, 1977). The social interaction of individuals between peers, teachers, family and perhaps the media will therefore create learning about work itself and the range of occupations available

(Bryant, Zvonkovic & Reynolds, 2006; O'Shea & Kirrane, 2008). This interaction influences the individual's occupational aspirations and narrows the range of occupations from which the individual will eventually choose as an occupation when transitioning from student to worker.

In occupational decision-making terms, Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism recognises that whilst people are agents of their own behaviour, they are influenced by their social environment and the complex cognitive interplay between memory, information and experience that drives them to make the choices they do. This concept is a major underpinning principle of both Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise in career choice and Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) identifies a model of "emergent interactive agency" (Bandura, 2001a:13). This theory suggests that thought processes exert deterministic influence on behaviour given that individuals are not solely reactive to external stimuli. Rather, people have the capacity to determine their behaviour through forethought, outcome expectation, self-reflection, self-appraisal and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001a; Bandura, 2001b). People are essentially masters of their own destiny. They have the power to produce effects by their own actions (Bandura, 2001b), as human functioning is "socially interdependent, richly contextualised and conditionally orchestrated within the dynamics of various societal subsystems and their complex interplay" (Bandura, 2001a:5). Personal agency, including that of occupational decision making, is inextricably intertwined with predominant social contexts and structures in which the individual exists (Elder, 1998; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Vondracek, Ferreira & dos Santos, 2010; Young & Valach, 2004). Decision-making behaviour is therefore influenced, and at times perhaps limited, by the

structures that support cognitive mechanisms such as education and perceived occupational status.

Social Learning and Social Cognitive Theory are central to this thesis. Occupational choice and the subsequent assessment of that choice are initiated on the basis of the interplay between what people learn at home and through schooling. This includes the influence of family and friends, the school environment and vicarious learning. Cognitive understanding of constructs such as status expectation (e.g. occupational and socioeconomic) and job elements expected to deliver job satisfaction are also factors impacting on occupational choice.

2.3.2 Occupational decision making: a social learning journey

The process of developing an occupational aspiration occurs over an extended period of time (O'Shea & Kirrane, 2008; Schoon & Parsons, 2002). It is shaped and reviewed over years in concert with the development of identity and the realisation of one's standing in the world (Thompson & Dahling, 2010). It can be likened to a journey of self-discovery and discovery of the external environment, from childhood through adolescence and into independent adulthood. Berger and Luckmann (1967) identify this social construction of reality as developing during periods of primary and secondary socialisation. Primary socialisation, or that which occurs during childhood, is said to be the most important as it provides a basis for social learning through the family and significant others. Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggest that a child will absorb perspectives on their social world that are consistent with the perceptions of his parents and those around him, and this remains with the individual to colour all other learning. Therefore, perceptions of and attitudes to social constructions, such as class, will be perpetuated. Secondary socialisation is defined as any further learning that

provides an individual with "role-specific knowledge" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 138) that prepares the individual to fulfil a role within certain environments or subcultures such as cliques in adolescence or institutionalised environments such as workplaces. It is therefore essential that an investigation (such as this one) of occupational choice identifies socially constructed antecedents (e.g. class orientation and understanding of role behaviours) to that choice and their impact on subsequent evaluation of that decision (i.e. the decision to remain in that occupation or choose another).

Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise provides a tool to use in identifying the cognitive processes and developmental stages that children move through when constructing a set of occupational options at the end of their school career. The theory posits that as a child develops a greater understanding of the world in which he lives, he will gain a greater understanding of the range of occupations deemed suitable to choose from. This understanding is moulded and moderated by external factors including comprehension of sex roles[2], socioeconomic status, social status beliefs inherited from the social environment, and self-concept (the bundle of characteristics one believes to be true about oneself). The Theory of Circumscription and Compromise allows investigation of the process of occupational decision making and, in particular, the choice to enter a hospitality occupation. Whilst Gottfredson updated this theory in later work (Gottfredson, 1996; Gottfredson, 2002), the fundamentals of the original theory remain. It is the fundamental framework identified in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise that this research is most concerned with and makes use of.

[2] Whilst ‚gender' might be a better descriptor in this context, Gottfredson (1981) uses the terms ‚sex roles' and ‚sextype' and so terminology has been maintained throughout this thesis.

Unlike other theories that focus on either social factors or psychological factors of occupational aspiration, the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise introduces theory that includes both, suggesting that neither offer a complete picture if considered in isolation. That is, psychological theories are built on the compatibility between the self and the job/occupation, with less regard for the impact of the social environment. Conversely, socioeconomic/social systems theory takes the impact of self-concept for granted or minimises the importance of non-economic factors. By blending the two, the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise identifies the ways in which career aspirations evolve over time in line with cognitive ability of children/adolescents, their sense and understanding of self and the impact of socioeconomic factors.

2.3.3 Circumscription and Compromise: The ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' and the narrowing of occupational options

The Theory of Circumscription and Compromise is a theory based on rational thinking by people; it suggests that over time people develop a method of circumscribing occupations that are not considered to be suitable for them (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000; Gottfredson, 1981; Gottfredson, 2002). This process is based on their own understanding of jobs, job roles and known incumbents (Gottfredson, 1981). Occupations divested from the range of options early in the child's development may not be reconsidered later in life and so the individual is left with a limited number of occupational options that sit within a self-constructed range of acceptable alternatives.

The criteria against which occupations are assessed for suitability are related in early life to fundamental socially constructed/learned factors such as perception of sex roles and social class. This is then followed later in life by factors such as interests, abilities and values when the sense of self is more firmly cemented. These criteria form the parameters within which

acceptable alternatives exist. The criteria are formed by the perceived limits to the individual in terms of traditional or community accepted sex roles, social class or interests/abilities/ values. Gottfredson calls this limited suite of occupational options the "social space – the zone of acceptable alternatives" (Gottfredson, 1981:548) and argues that once fixed they will have a bearing on the vocational behaviour of the individual into the future. Gottfredson (1981) therefore suggests that over time individuals limit their occupational options (Armstrong & Crombie, 2000). By the time individuals come to choose a career path and transition from student to worker, earlier circumscribed options have been erased and are seldom reconsidered. The process is gradual and heavily influenced by social factors. Therefore, when investigating why individuals choose to enter into certain occupations, one needs also to identify the occupations that remain as viable alternative occupational options.

2.3.4 The development of occupational aspiration over time

Essentially an exercise in cementing the self-concept, growing up is important to the foundation of making occupational choices (Betz, 1994; Super, 1980). Maturing as an individual rests on the fundamentals of social learning (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 2004; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). It is about learning what is acceptable and not acceptable in relation to those sharing the social environment (O'Shea & Kirrane, 2008, 1962; Bandura, 1986; Lindesmith et al., 1977; Weick, 1995) and includes the formulation of occupational options in line with cognitive development. Gottfresdon (1981) provides a stages model to identify how social learning and cognitive development occurs over time. These are as follows:

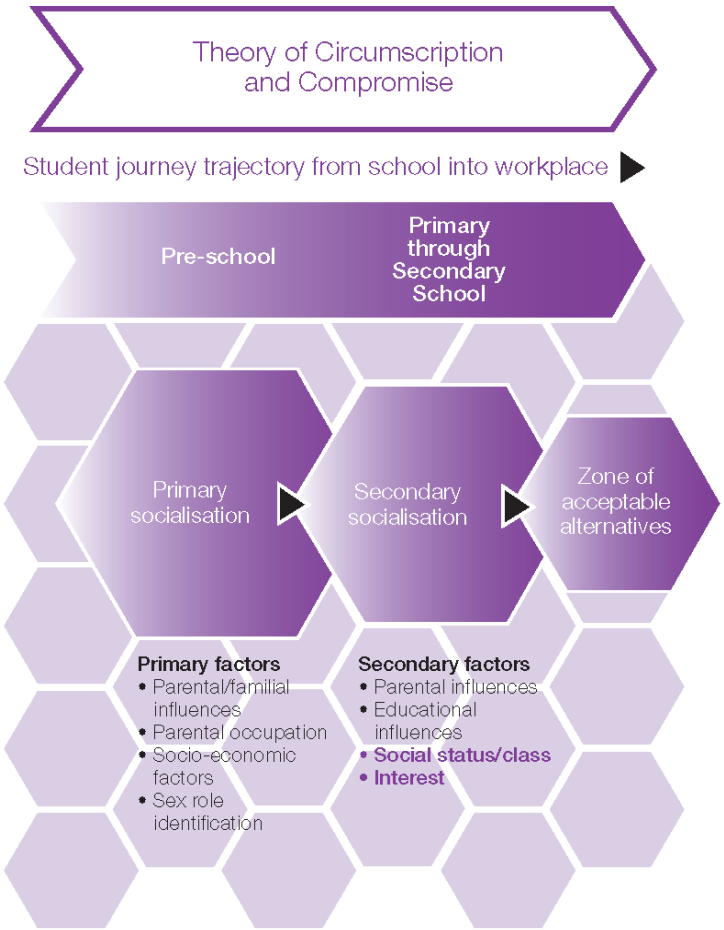
Stage one. Orientation to size and an individual's power occurs at around ages 3-5 years when the child develops an understanding that they will grow up to be an adult as opposed to a fairy or a super hero.

Stage two. Orientation to sex based occupational roles occurs at around ages 6-8 years when children develop a self concept by gender.

Stage three. Orientation to social valuation is developed at around ages 9-13 years when more abstract concepts of social class and abilities begin to determine behaviour in social settings and generate expectations.

Stage four. Orientation to the internal, unique self occurs around the age of 14 and is also referred to as the adolescent identity crisis. This „journey' can be conceptualised as illustrated in the following model using the additional concepts of primary and secondary socialisation.

Figure 3. Adapted from Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1981)



Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise suggests that once children develop an understanding that they will have an adult existence, the process of circumscription and compromise of occupational options begins after stage one as described previously. The subsequent three stages of the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise are discussed further.

2.3.5 The understanding of sex role/type

Whilst not specifically addressed in this thesis, it is important to provide a background to the circumscription of possible occupational choices by the perception of sex role/type. By the age of eight, a child will understand that work is a part of adult life and that being „Batman' is not a work option. However, they will form perceptions that certain job roles are likely to be filled by either women or men (Bourne & Ozbilgin, 2008). Sex roles, and the perception of the possible constraints of sex roles, are influenced by family and input of significant others. For example, a child may think „my dad's a fireman; therefore all firemen are men', or „I'm a girl; therefore I should be a florist like my mum or a nurse like my aunt'.

According to the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, gender plays a significant role in narrowing the multiplicity of career choices available (Gianakos, 1995; Helwig, 2004; Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2002; Krieshok, 1998; Leung & Harmon, 1990; Turner & Lapan, 2002). Gender identification is one of the earliest forms of socialisation and may be the most powerful (McMahon & Patton, 1997). Cross-cultural studies have found that gender-related traits fit common stereotypes of males and females (Gianakos, 1995); that is, males are stereotyped as active, competent and rational whereas females are characterised as passive, emotional and compassionate. Occupations that fit these characteristics will take on a male or female character. Perceptions related to gender will restrict choices where children align

their own gender with stereotypes of job roles (Betz 1994; Giles & Rea, 1999; Tracy & Ward, 1998). Thus, the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' starts to narrow. Given the parameters of this thesis, gender identification as an element of occupational decision making was not investigated. It was accepted that this first level of circumscription and compromise was already executed and cemented at the time of data collection from participants.

2.3.6 Occupational status

From the age of approximately nine years, individuals typically begin to develop an understanding of occupational status or prestige (Gottfredson, 1981). Given that occupational roles can be the most telling indication of social class (Ezzy; 1997; Herr, 1996; Jones & Davis, 1986; Thompson & Subich, 2006), this is not unexpected. That is, people have a socially influenced perception of a status continuum and where occupations exist within that continuum. Gottfredson (1981) suggests that this is relatively constant across class and sex types with both men and women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds perceiving the continuum in much the same way as men and women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

2.3.7 The importance of social class to occupational decision making

A discussion regarding the place of social class and social mobility is central to this thesis as it identifies how hospitality work (in particular) is perceived and where it exists in a social ‚landscape'. Such a discussion also provides a foundation to the question of how social class impacts on occupational decision making. Social class is a much debated concept but has utility here. It can be defined as "a set of relations to economic resources, prestige and societal power" (Brown, Fukunaga, Umemoto & Wicker, 1996:160). Whilst social class has been considered to be a "nuisance or background" variable in research of occupational choice

(Thompson & Subich, 2006:20), it is identified as an important element in the study of occupational decision making as the perception of one's own class plays a critical role in the process of choosing an occupation (Ashby & Schoon, 2010; Brown et al., 1996; Noonan, Hall & Blustein, 2007; Willis, 1977). Given the imprecise nature of the definition of social class, its meaning within this thesis is identified as the sum of an individual's socioeconomic background (including that of the family of origin) and occupational status.

Since Marx, many scholars have studied the role of social class, the inequality of distribution of resources, racial differences, regional differences and other factors of social difference (Jones & Davis, 1986). In Australia, it has been suggested that social class can be determined by the level of ownership of income-generating property (upper class), attainment of technical and professional qualifications (middle class) and the provision of labour (working class) (Wild, 1971). However, whilst the working class is made up of a range of different occupations, there is substantial stratification within this class that is determined by the occupational status attached to jobs (Daniel, 1983).

It is suggested that an individual's occupation is the primary indicator of social class (Graetz & McAllister, 1994). But occupations are not acquired by some inexplicable or random mechanism. People are influenced by their family origins and the inheritance of social standing from previous generations (Ashby & Schoon, 2010; Graetz & McAllister, 1994; Lindstrom, Doren, Metheny, Johnson & Zane, 2007; Willis, 1977). The concept of social class is also significantly moderated by family background (Hargrove, Creagh & Burgess, 2002; Lindsrom et al., 2007; Turner & Lapan, 2002). Where an individual perceives himself in relation to others is based on the socioeconomic background of his family, his parents' occupations and those of his peers (Bandura & Jourden, 1991; Erikson & Goldthorpe; 2002; Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2002). Therefore, occupational

aspiration is heavily influenced by the socially influenced construct of social class (Chaves, Diemer, Blustein, Gallgher & DeVoy, Cassares & Perry, 2004; Hargrove et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2002). Individuals will define lower and upper limits in regard to the perceived occupational status of acceptable occupations, and this will depend on the perception of relative social standing that an individual holds about both himself and occupations.

Thompson and Subich (2006) suggest that perception of social class influences the way in which people make sense of work and how they find motivation for it. How people deal with perceived stigmas in regard to their work is also related to social class and identity (Kreiner, Ashforth & Sluss, 2006; Roca, 2010). So too, children determine the desirability of jobs by their own relative perceived class (Gottfredson, 1981; Willis, 1977). In essence, when children circumscribe occupations from their ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' (Gottfredson, 1981), they perceive where they exist in regard to social class and choose to remain in the same class, or choose to affect social mobility either downward (to a lower class role) or upward (to a higher class role), dependent on a range of familial or other social influences (Strauss, 1971). However, this may not be a conscious decision as individuals are not often cognisant that there is a choice to be made, even if one presents itself; indeed, as identified in the work of Willis (1977) examining how working class children find themselves in working class occupations. The concept of rational occupational choice must be viewed in the light of occupational options available, given readily accepted social constructs such as class and the privileges and disadvantages it variously bestows on individuals through expectations and perceptions of class-bound occupational roles (Strauss, 1971).

Understanding of the concept of class is variable and, at any one point in time, affected by factors such as marketing and the media. As a conceptualised set of "myths produced within

a [social] communication system" (Denzin, 1986:195), people often fail to conceptualise constructs such as one's own social class accurately (Bandura, 1986; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Weick, 1995). The process of „occupational circumscription' and the development of a „zone of acceptable alternatives', therefore, may be based on assumptions about one's own place in a social stratum.

2.3.8 Occupational status and VET

Access to education is fundamental to occupational status and status mobility (Aziz & Kamal, 2009; Jones & McMillan, 2001; Marks, McMillan, Jones & Ainley, 2000). Social background and participation in training and higher education will impact on both occupational choice and occupational attainment. It is important then to identify the role of VET in the context of this research.

Vocational education is offered widely in Australian secondary schools and colleges and has been instrumental in providing alternatives to people who may have become disengaged with academic courses of study (ACER, 2010a; Nguyen, 2010). Whilst over 40 per cent of Australian senior secondary students participate in VET in some form, it has been seen as a "soft option of low status" (Dalley-Trim, Alloway, Patterson & Walker, 2007:29). Indeed, it has been identified that VET is populated by students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, low achievers and individuals with lower self-rated academic ability (ACER, 2010b; Anlezark et al., 2006; Nguyen, 2010). This has an impact on social mobility as those without access to higher education (e.g. university) have a narrower range of vocational options from which to choose. Whilst VET students may go on to undertake further training, they are unlikely to achieve a qualification higher than Certificate III (Trade Certificate equivalent) (Nguyen, 2010). This is consistent with the literature that suggests that lower levels of

education preclude access to occupations of a higher status (Wild, 1971) and may support intergenerational socioeconomic reproduction of inequality (Almquist, Modin & Ostberg, 2009; Marks, 2009; Marks & McMillan, 2003).

2.3.9 Valuing hospitality work

Whilst it may be argued that a new era of more permeable class barriers exists today (van Leeuwen, 2009), people will still vary in their access to and ability/desire to use social tools as saleable human capital assets in a competitive labour market. This may include education, work skills, intelligence and motivation. Despite the move toward a knowledge economy (Baum, 2008; Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Drucker, 1969) and the domination of service employment such as hospitality (Broom, Duncan-Jones, Lancaster & McDonnell, 1977; Goldthorpe, 2002), the status of occupations and their relation to perceptions of prestige or value is said to remain a cultural universal. For example, burgeoning employment in service industries globally (including hospitality) have given rise to the "McJob" (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004); this work is seen as low paid, low prestige with associated low dignity. Such work offers little or no prospect of career advancement, but is perceived as being a good career choice by those who have never had a job (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004).

Service industries (such as hospitality) have also polarised workers' pay and conditions into casual and permanent roles. Many service organisations utilise a core of skilled workers and rely heavily on flexibility afforded by casual labour which tends to lack social benefits of job security, professional development, leave provisions, opportunities for advancement and associated remuneration benefits (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004). These jobs are often categorised as low skilled (Baum, 2002) but important sources of employment for young people and women. A new underclass of workers may be created with a division between the

„haves' with permanent (even if poorly paid) skilled work and the „have-nots' with casual, (perceived) low skilled work (Goldthorpe, 2002; Piore and Sabel, 1984). This is reminiscent of Weber's idea of "social closure" (Parkin, 1974:3) where social collectives maximise their own rewards by restricting access to opportunities to a "circle of eligibles" with a process of exclusion by certain social attributes such as permanent work. The fact that hospitality occupations are often „McJobs', often casual and lacking in occupational prestige/value, raises a question as to why individuals identify and cultivate hospitality-based occupations within their „zone of acceptable alternatives'.

2.3.10 Interest as an antecedent to occupational choice

Around the age of 14, individuals enter the final stage identified within the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (Gottfredson, 1981). This is the time at which individuals start applying their own interests, values and abilities to their (now narrowed) group of acceptable occupational alternatives. By this age of course, most individuals will have a grasp on their own place in the world, having been influenced and reinforced by external factors such as family, socioeconomic conditions, accepted social values, accepted codes of behaviour, the media and peer pressure.

The work of Holland has advanced the development of theory surrounding the role of interests in career decision making (Campbell & Borgen, 1999; Gottfredson, 1999; Hogan & Blake, 1999; Holland, 1985; Rottinghaus, Larson & Borgen, 2003). Said to measure identity through the "aspirations, hopes and dreams" of individuals (Savickas & Gottfredson, 1999), personal interests are central to occupational aspirations of individuals (Campbell & Borgen, 1999; Tracey, 2010; Bonitz, Larson & Armstrong, 2010). Interests align to the personality of the individual (Savickas & Gottfredson, 1999; Hogan & Blake, 1999; Weinrach, 1996) and

therefore allow for ‚person environment/work fit' (Chartrand & Walsh, 1999; Durr & Tracey, 2009; Gottfredson & Richards, 1999; Smart & Thompson, 2001).

The Theory of Circumscription and Compromise argues that, by adolescence, individuals have organised their occupational choices by interests, thus choosing to work in an environment that fits with their personality (Chartrand & Walsh, 1999; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Weinrach, 1996). Where interests are not congruent with certain occupations, jobs in that environment will be divested from the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives', thus narrowing the range of occupational options further.

2.3.11 A critique of the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise

Despite the certain utility of Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, it is not without criticism. Specifically, the monograph does not attempt to address the concept that the application of the theory is culture and time bound. That is, different cultures may have differing values regarding occupations and work itself (Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998); therefore, the range of acceptable career alternatives may differ. So too, one needs only to recognise the changing role of women in the workforce and move to encourage sex-atypical interests among both men and women to recognise that time has an impact on how careers and occupations are viewed (Perry, Przybysz & Al-Sheikh, 2009; Sax & Bryant, 2006; Williams & Subich, 2006). For example, at one time it would have been unusual for girls to harbour aspirations of being a plumber, engineer or criminal lawyer, or boys of being a nurse, florist or child care worker. The gender barrier of occupations may be more or less permeable over time or in differing contexts.

Gottfredson's (1981) theory nevertheless provides a valuable underpinning framework to inform this research. Blending the concepts and constructs of socioeconomic and psychological theory to identify the means by which individuals create occupational aspirations sheds light on why and how individuals choose to move into certain careers and occupations; in this case, the hospitality industry.

When individuals are facing the prospect of career compromise (i.e. having to seek an alternative to their first occupational choice), the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise may provide an indicator as to how and why individuals choose to modify their occupational behaviour, or indeed, their perceptions of occupations, the way they do. Gottfredson's theory provides a framework for understanding the precursors to occupational choice behaviour of individuals at the point of transition from student to worker. But occupational decision making does not end with the first taste of work. Indeed, occupational decision making may be, for some, a highly dynamic process extending over a long period of time. This requires a longer term investigation past the transition from student to worker, particularly when secondary school occupational decisions are acted upon and found to be disappointing in some way.

2.3.12 Occupational decision making in early career

Whilst the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise provides a framework for the investigation of occupational decision making up to the point of transition from student to worker, it is rare that an individual will remain in that first occupation for the duration of their working life. Initial occupational choices are assessed during early career for suitability, and subsequent occupational decision making informs occupational choice behaviour to either

stay in that job or seek a different one. Therefore, it is imperative to look to the decision-making process that individuals employ once in their first occupational role.

People choose and leave occupations for many different reasons, but if attrition and employment turnover can be identified as behavioural responses to environmental or personal factors, Social Cognitive Career Theory can give insight as to why and how this happens. This is a framework that recognises that individuals engage in self-reflection to make sense of prior learning (operant, associative and vicarious). Individuals also consider perceptions of personal and environmental/contextual factors in choosing to behave in certain ways in pursuit of occupational goals (Duffy & Dik, 2009; Hirschi & Vondracek, 2009; Schaub & Tokar, 2005; Young & Valach, 2004). Therefore, Social Cognitive Career Theory sheds light on how people come to define their occupational expectations and goals. It also identifies why individuals maintain their determination to pursue an occupation even if their goals and expectations do not come to fruition or have to be modified based on actual workplace experiences.

In the context of this thesis it is important to understand how an individual assesses their initial occupational choice and decides to remain in their chosen hospitality occupation. Identifying how individuals make their way into a hospitality occupation can be addressed by using the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, but understanding what keeps people in their hospitality occupation is better achieved with understanding of the decision-making processes of individuals once they have had some experience of their chosen occupation. Lent et al.'s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory provides a framework for investigating this decision-making process. The following model provides an indication of how elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory fit in regard to the occupational „journey' of participants in this context.

2.4 *Social Cognitive Career Theory*

Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) takes Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and develops a platform on which to build a framework for understanding intertwined aspects of career choice and development. However, the theory lends itself to a more expansive process of behaviour than that simply of choice or development. Social Cognitive Career Theory also recognises the important link between occupational choice and the role of background factors related to primary and secondary socialisation such as family, socioeconomic factors and peer support (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Hargrove, Inman & Crane, 2005; Lindstrom et al., 2007).

Other theories aim to describe or explain occupational choice as a rational decision that is variously based on factors such as interest, personality type, expectancy of outcome or inherent factors such as gender and heredity. However, Social Cognitive Career Theory presupposes that individuals are agents of their own providence who are able and motivated to move beyond the confines of previous learning and experience. It is built on the theory that career behaviour (not just simple occupational choice) is a dynamic process of social learning, decision making and behaviour modification dependent on the individual's level of self-efficacy, their intended goals and perception of outcome expectations (Diegelman & Subich, 2001; Krieshok, 1998; Lent et al., 1994; Schaub & Tokar, 2005). Lent et al., (1994) suggest a complex intertwining of the factors of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation that influence behaviour with shifts in the weight of influence given to each factor dependent on the influence of environmental situations and personal characteristics. Thus, Social Cognitive Career Theory absorbs Bandura's (1977) concept of triadic reciprocal determinism.

In developing a dynamic, self-referencing model, Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) presents a framework that seeks to illustrate the behavioural intricacies of occupational choice. Social Cognitive Career Theory identifies that occupational decision-making behaviour is dependent on the development of vocationally relevant interests, the identification of occupational options, subsequent performance in the job role and (importantly in this context) resolve to continue with the choice once made (Pinquart, Juang & Silbereisen, 2003). The key elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory are self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectations. These are further explained.

2.4.1 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a socially learned construct that defines a person's belief in themselves and their own judgement regarding their abilities to achieve certain outcomes (Bandura, 1986). It is important and useful in the investigation of an intention to enter a certain occupation and is related to the goals individuals set for themselves. Whilst it has been used as an indicator of occupational choice behaviour (Anderson & Betz, 2001; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli; 2001; Betz & Hackett, 1981; Betz & Voyten, 1997; Hargrove et al., 2002; Rottinghaus et al., 2003), self-efficacy is also important as an indicator of decision-making efficacy and is an integral part of early workplace socialisation.

Self-efficacy is not static, but is particular to situations that interact with other factors such as environmental or interpersonal factors (Bandura et al., 2001b; Betz & Hackett, 1987; Mattern & Shaw, 2010). Self-efficacy is largely an internal construct and may not be correlated with objective measures of competency (such as exams, tests or competency ratings). It is moulded by the perceptions and accepted norms of the immediate social context such as family and friends (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Bandura et al., 2001; Betz & Hackett, 1987;

Bryant et al., 2006; Bluestein, Walbridge, Fiedlander & Palladino, 1991; Turner & Lapan, 2002). That is, the individual builds a perception of their own capability and this is more potent than other forms of competency or capability measurement (Lent et al., 1994). This is an important element of this thesis as individuals who perceive themselves to be more or less capable than peer, workmate or employer assessment of their abilities may encounter issues that impact upon, perhaps even changing, their career goals and outcome expectations. This in turn may lead to turnover, occupational exit or a realignment of goals and expectations.

Self-efficacy is said to be the most significant element of personal agency (Bandura, 1986: Bandura, 2001b; Betz & Hackett, 1987; Betz & Hackett, 2006; Lent & Brown, 2006) and underpins the individual's move into certain occupations as well as having strong relationships with class and interests as described in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (Gottfredson, 1981). This interplay between self-efficacy and other occupational choice antecedents are discussed further.

2.4.2 Self-efficacy and class

Perceived social class and perceptions of self-efficacy are said to be indelibly intertwined (Thompson & Subich, 2006). Social class affects access to educational resources to develop competencies and support from family & peers who may exert influence regarding the ambitions and/or capabilities of the individual. It also colours perceptions of work availability and the way in which work is perceived socially. For example, where there may be high competition for higher status work, low self-efficacy may undermine motivation. The attitudes toward work and the desire or motivation for work itself is also affected by self-efficacy as moderated by social class where work is seen variously as mandatory, desirable or an optional activity for adults (O'Shea & Kirrane, 2008; Spenner & Featherman, 1978).

Social class has an effect on how individuals perceive their means of achieving tasks involved in pursuing and finding work. It is related to the interpretation of access to resources such as education in order to be successful in finding work in their chosen occupation via their own behaviours and decision making (Duffy & Dik, 2009; Lent et al., 1999; Thompson & Subich, 2006).

Associative perceptions of class are accepted when an individual moves into a certain occupational role. For example, jobs with low occupational status may be associated with low levels of ability which may impact negatively on an individual's perceptions of their own self-efficacy (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006; Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004; Sargent, 2003). This is a fundamental element that influences occupational decision making during childhood and is said to be one of the means by which occupational choices are aspired to or divested from a range of occupational possibilities (Gottfredson, 1981).

2.4.3 Self-efficacy and interest

Whilst some overlap is said to exist between self-efficacy and interest as components of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Diegelman & Subich, 2001; Tracey; 2010), Rottinghaus et al., (2003) suggest that self-efficacy and interest have a reciprocal effect on each other. That is, there is support for Bandura's process of triadic reciprocal determinism. The machinations between an individual's interests in a topic may support an ardent pursuit of developmental activities and, thus, the individual becomes adept at that skill. The occupation is therefore believed to be a valid occupational option. This interest/job fit is also supported by Holland's interest inventories (Holland, 1959; Holland, 1997; Gottfredson & Richards, 1999; Savickas & Gottfredson, 1999). Alternatively, if an individual believes themselves to be incompetent at an activity they may avoid researching occupations with that component or

demand for that skill/ability (Bandura, 1996; Rottinghaus et al., 2003; Silvia, 2003) and may look for occupational options with alternate demands (e.g. „I'm not good at maths so I'll not be an accountant, but I might be a florist'). In essence, self-efficacy is a socio-cognitive mechanism that contributes to the development of interests which are then either supported or obstructed by background or environmental issues such as socioeconomic factors (e.g. access to education or workplace support for skill development) (Dufy & Dik, 2009; Lent et al., 1999; Schaub & Tokar, 2005).

2.4.4 Goals

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) supposes that whilst the behaviour of individuals is affected by personal experiences and the environment, they are more than just "mechanical responders to deterministic forces" (Lent et al., 1994:84). Goals play a significant role in regulating the individual's behaviour and allow people to organise and guide their own behaviour over time (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Diegleman & Subich, 2001; Lent & Brown, 2006; Vondracek et al., 2010). Goals allow the individual to control their behaviour and make choices by a process of self-referencing – making sense of their world and their learning to date and applying this to future action (Bandura, 1986; Weick, 1995). Individuals can reflect on what their past behaviour and choices have delivered them and, thus, they make choices to continue or change their behaviour dependent on what they want to happen in the future.

Occupational goals can drive career intention from an early age through to adolescence and into early career (Gottfredson, 1981; Patton & Creed, 2007). They can be created out of a range of socially constructed factors such as values, interests, environmental conditions and contributions (Bandura et al., 2001; Hargrove et al., 2002; Lindstrom et al., 2007; Marjoribanks, 1996; O'Shea & Kirrane, 2008). This is a particularly important element of

the theory as it relates directly to the ways in which individuals learn from their own experiences and vicariously through the experience of others, suggesting that the constructions made in the home or via friends will have a bearing on later occupational behaviour (Tynkkynen, Nurmi & Salmela-Aro, 2010).

2.4.5 Outcome expectation

Outcome expectations are important to the foundation of social cognitive theory and reflect probable response outcomes. Bandura (1986) identified classes of outcome expectation such as physical, social and self-evaluative; that is, what individuals expect to happen given certain behaviour. In this case, this might be money, occupational status and job satisfaction (Deigelman & Subich, 2001; Gianakos, 1995). In the context of this thesis, outcome expectation may provide a predictor of turnover intention in early career. If individuals perceive that their occupational outcome expectations have not been met (for example, the money isn't as good as hoped or job satisfaction is low), intention to leave the occupation or workplace may result. Of course, the opposite is also possible where outcome expectations are met – intention to leave may be extinguished. Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) supposes a dynamic, context-bound process of self-reflection and self-regulation, mirroring Bandura's triadic reciprocal determination. Outcome expectations may well be moderated in the face of greater influence by other factors, for example, self-efficacy (i.e. „I'm really good at this, so I'll stay with it despite the poor money/status/satisfaction').

2.4.6 Social Cognitive Career Theory and the context of this thesis

Interaction between the three components of the theoretical construct of Social Cognitive Career Theory (i.e. self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation) influences the individual's occupational choice. The interaction between self-efficacy, outcome expectation and goals is

dynamic and context-bound (Bandura, 1986, Lent et al., 1994). Each component will be afforded different weighting or significance depending on the circumstances, and at different times in the occupational journey. For example, goals may take precedence prior to entering into the hospitality workplace (e.g. the desire to become a chef) with the expectation of low pay and hard work overridden by the perception that the individual is interested in and is good at cooking (interest and self-efficacy). Once in the role, an inability to pay one's rent may mean that the goal of being a chef may be circumvented by a reappraisal of the situation and occupational behaviour may change (e.g. seek work elsewhere or find another occupation). This has implications when examining occupational attrition, turnover intention, persistence and compromise, as potential impacts exist from the point of finding an interest in a particular occupation (for example, during childhood) through to the experience of early workplace entry.

Social Cognitive Career Theory provides a useful guide in determining why individuals remain in the hospitality workplace even if previous expectations have been disconfirmed. The dynamic nature of Social Cognitive Career Theory suggests that learning over time and by the process of self-referencing, individuals make sense of their current position in light of past events and experiences (Weick, 1995). They then make changes to their behaviour to reinvent the future based on, or even in spite of, the impact of their background and early socialisation (e.g. the influence of family and social class). This process may require repositioning the perception of self-efficacy, the moderation of expectations and/or the modification of occupational goals. The following model provides an indication of how elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory fit in the occupational „journey' of participants in the context of this thesis.

Figure 4. Adapted from Social Cognitive Career Theory, Lent Brown and Hackett, (1994)

2.5 *A rationale for this research*

By its very nature, the development of occupational choice and expectation is a cognitive process borne out of the interaction of the individual with their social environment (Lent et al., 1994), both prior to occupational decision making and during early career. Therefore, it is not sufficient to look only at social background or parental influences on occupational decision making up to the point of transition from school to work. It is also not enough to

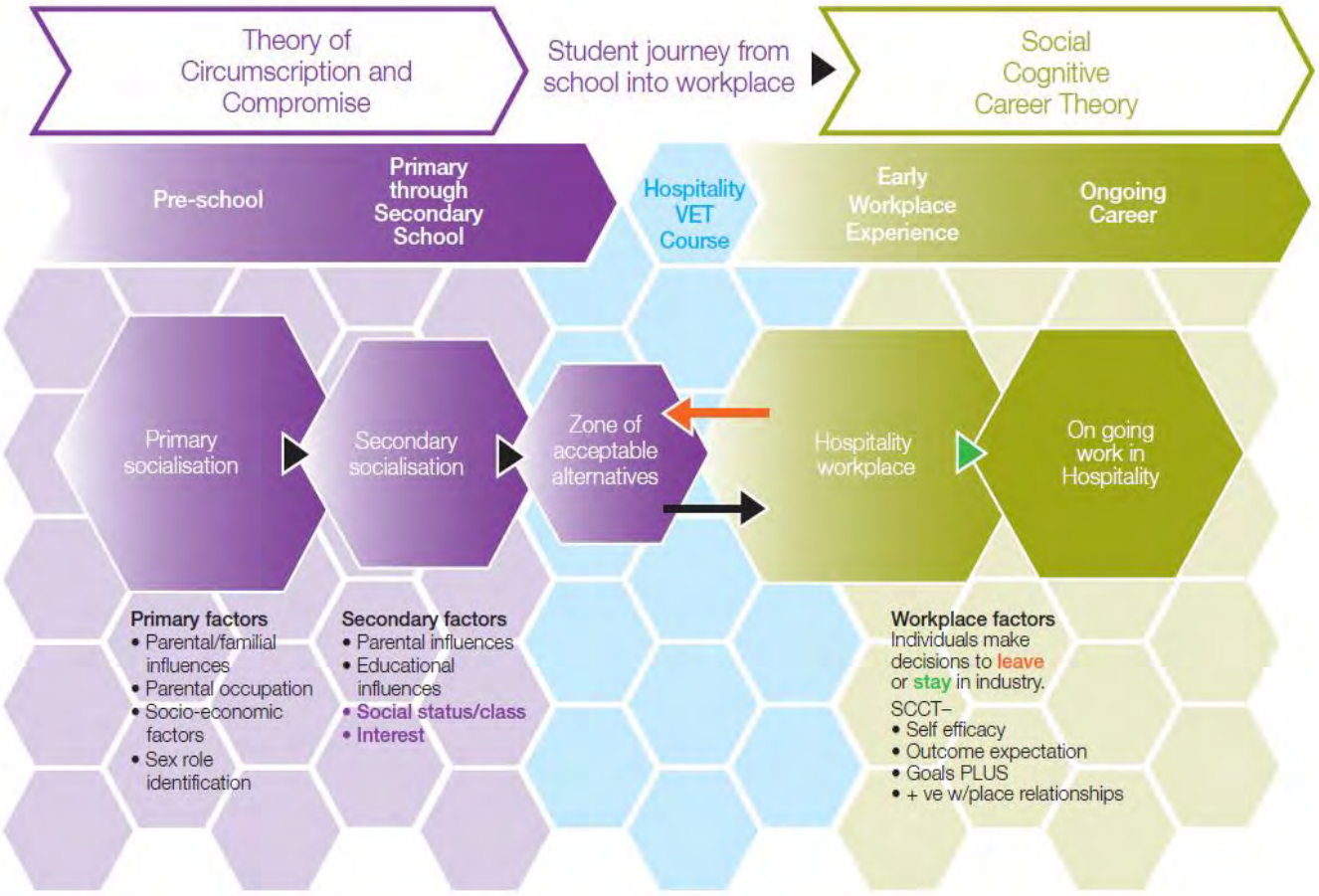
look only at early career assessment of an individual's initial occupational decision. A consolidated model that joins Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory may better examine the social cognitive machinations that inform an initial occupational choice and then the assessment of suitability of that choice in hospitality VET students.

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1981) provides the promise that a researcher is able to investigate how career options have been arrived at through an iterative and evolutionary process throughout the early life of the individual. Socially constructed beliefs of class and interests form part of the framework around which the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' is built and from which occupational choices will be made. Hence, each individual will have a distinct story to tell based on their own experiences, social values perceptions and beliefs. Following on from the development of a ‚zone of acceptable alternatives', Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory provides an iterative cognitive process that rests on the premise that individuals make sense of their occupational choices through reflective and social processes that in turn moderate or modify career behaviour of individuals.

The theories of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory apparently complement each other in that when combined, they promise to capture different elements of the process of occupational choice and early career occupational decision making. Therefore, they may offer greater utility when consolidated to provide a holistic picture of this transitional period of student to worker during the hospitality VET course and entrance into the workforce. No single model satisfactorily or explicitly recognises the fundamental connection between the processes of primary and secondary socialisation in occupational choice and the subsequent impact of that socialisation into early occupational

decision making in the hospitality VET context. Melding the two theories as described in the model below is believed to provide the tools to investigate this phenomenon appropriately.

Figure 5. A proposed model of occupational decision making in hospitality VET students (adapted from the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory)



2.6 *Research questions*

To adequately identify how individuals come to find themselves in a hospitality occupation and, perhaps more importantly in this context, how they come to a decision to remain in their chosen hospitality occupation, it is necessary to use theoretical tools that adequately address the process of social learning and subsequent career behaviour that is directed by that learning. To this end the theoretical question that this thesis aims to address is:

How can the theories of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory be consolidated to increase their capacity to explain occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

Sub-questions are derived from consideration of the linear view of the process of occupational decision making; these questions are identified in the following chapter.

2.7 *Summary*

This chapter has introduced the literature used within this thesis. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) and Social Cognitive Theory (1986) have been discussed as they are fundamental to the understanding of the context of the theories of Circumscription and Compromises and Social Cognitive Career Theory. Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise is particularly useful in identifying how individuals come to divest options throughout their development to adolescence to arrive at a ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. The theory provides a context in which to apply Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory. Given the ongoing journey of the individual from child, to student, to worker, it is imperative that the process be viewed as one progression. Therefore, it is suggested that, in this context, the two theories be consolidated to provide a more powerful tool to understand occupational

decision making during the transition from hospitality VET student to worker and, indeed, for ongoing occupational decision making. A discussion of the methodology used to address the research questions, as outlined in this chapter, follows.

Chapter Three

Method

3 Method

3.1 *Introduction*

This chapter provides a description of the research method adopted in this study to respond to the research questions. The research sample is introduced and the method by which the sample was derived is described. The reasoning for using a longitudinal method and an account of how it was conducted is provided. Given that both qualitative and quantitative methods were used, detail on each is described. A rationale is provided to support the use of this approach in order to match the demands of the theoretical framework and to respond appropriately to the questions posed.

3.2 *Rationale for the thesis*

To arrive at a response to the over-arching theoretical question of how the theories of Circumscription and Compromise (Gottfredson, 1981) and Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) can be best consolidated to reflect occupational decision making in hospitality VET students, the following sub-questions are posed:

RQ1a: How does the family of origin impact on occupational decision making by hospitality VET students?

RQ1b: How does the status of hospitality work impact on occupational decision making by hospitality VET students?

RQ2: What role does „interest' play as an antecedent to occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

RQ3: How do „self-efficacy', 'goal orientation' and „outcome expectation' interact to achieve occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

RQ4: What other elements impact on the occupational decision making process in hospitality VET students during early career experiences?

The research questions identified above were best addressed by following hospitality VET students through their journey from student to worker to capture the machinations of occupational decision making. A longitudinal approach, which is detailed later in the chapter, was used to identify occupational choice rationale and to explore the assessment of and change to occupational decisions over time. Data were collected from a panel of participants over an 18 month period. This period began at the time of entering a VET course and initial occupational decision making through exposure to the hospitality workplace and subsequent transition into the workplace or ongoing study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used and these will be described in this chapter. The sample is now introduced.

3.3 *The sample*

Purposive sampling was used to identify the most appropriate subjects to inform this research topic (Bryman, 2004; Neuman, 2000). This non-randomised method of sampling allows "theoretically significant, not necessarily statistically significant units (to be) selected for study" (Brewer & Hunter 2006:93). In this case, students who had made an initial decision to engage in vocational hospitality training in Tasmania and who had an occupational aspiration in hospitality were approached. To generate a sufficient sample of students, all Tasmanian secondary colleges (i.e. Years 11 & 12) identified as offering Certificate I and/or Certificate II (i.e. entry level qualifications) in hospitality were contacted by letter and by telephone and invited to participate in the research; 11 secondary colleges agreed to take part. This allowed a spread of secondary colleges from both the public, Catholic and private systems as well as a geographical spread within Tasmania (see Table 1).

Once participant secondary colleges were identified, the hospitality VET teachers were contacted and a more extensive description of the research program was provided (see Appendix A1). Teachers were then asked to provide written information describing the research program to their classes prior to a personal visit by the researcher (see Appendix A2). During each of the college visits the researcher provided a verbal explanation of the research program in person. This briefing included the reason for undertaking the research, the broad research questions and interview timing and sequence. At this time, recruitment of participants to the series of three interviews was conducted by requesting volunteers. Those students who indicated an interest were then provided with parental information sheets and permission forms (see Appendices A3 and A4). Given that most of the intended participants were under 18 years of age, participation was restricted to volunteers who took part with parental/guardian permission. No student under the age of 18 years was admitted to the research program without parental permission. Appointments were then made with VET teachers for the initial one-on-one in-depth interviews with participants during normal class times (see Table 1 for an indication of the initial participant sample).

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

College **	Public/Private	Region	Total Students *	% Participated
HC	Public	South	12	8 (66%)
RC	Public	South	20	8 (40%)
CC	Public	South	15	7 (46%)
G	Catholic	South	19	4 (21%)
HS	Private	South	12	5 (41%)
STM+	Catholic	South	4	4 (100%)
HL	Public	North West	20>	8 (40%)
SP	Catholic	North	37#	1 (3%)
LC	Public	North	18	5 (27%)
D	Public	North West	14	9 (64%)
SM	Private	South	7	2 (28%)
Total Students in Sample (at initiation)			178	61
			100%	34%
Total Students in VET in Schools Hospitality in Tasmania 2007 (Yrs 11 &12)			661^	9%
Total VET students achieving a Cert I or II in Hospitality 2007			193	

** Secondary college names have been coded to retain anonymity.
* Students starting a hospitality VET course at the beginning of the year.
# Not indicative of students doing full Certificate. Some were only enrolled to undertake one or two units. The secondary college was unable to differentiate enrolments.
> Approximate numbers. Secondary college was unable to identify final enrolments.
+ Enrolled in Certificate II in Tourism, but wanting to undertake work in hospitality.
^ Skills Tasmania data does not differentiate from students undertaking a full Certificate qualification and those enrolled in just one or two units of that qualification. Therefore, whilst undeterminable, the number of students undertaking a full Certificate qualification would be much less than this figure.

3.4 *A longitudinal approach – a rationale*

Longitudinal studies are considered to be more complicated, costly and administratively burdensome than other methods such as cross-sectional approaches (Janson in Magnusson & Bergman, 1990; Ticehurst & Veal, 1999). However, a longitudinal approach to the interview program was imperative to capture the machinations of occupational decision making over time and during the transitional period from student to worker in hospitality VET students. It allowed an iterative and inductive generation of data where occupational expectations,

experiences and future aspirations were catalogued over time as they metamorphosed into narratives that gave up identifiable sequences of experiences (Bujold, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1988). Alternatives such as cross-sectional methods would not have provided a continuous analysis of occupational decision making that was both time and experience bound.

The interview program timetable was matched to the various stages of decision making (see Figure 6) as participants moved from initial occupational decision making (e.g. „I want to be a chef'), through exposure to the world of hospitality work into another decision-making process of early career (i.e. „Is chef work really for me?', „What will I do instead?'). The first round of interviews was conducted at the beginning of the VET course (February 2007) with the second conducted at the end of the VET course (October–November 2007). The final round of interviews was conducted during August the following year. Over the course of the three interviews, both cognitive and environmental factors impacting on occupational decision making were examined. The relatively short cycle (i.e. 18 months) facilitated greater utility of a longitudinal approach and allowed an examination of the evolution of occupational aspiration or choice and the subsequent impact of work experience on occupational choice modification.

A longitudinal approach allowed the data to illustrate a set of factors that emerged over the course of the interviews – moving away from perfunctory determinism that may exist in positivist rationalisations (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Clarke, 2005). This was particularly important to this research as the element of change (e.g. occupational aspirations, choice and expectations) was fundamental to the way in which participants came to a final decision regarding their intention to remain in or leave a hospitality occupation. Interrogating the narrative and discourse embedded within the participants' interviews gave an insight into the nature of experience, the sequence of how participants came to a decision or how knowledge

had been generated (Polkinghorne, 1988). This was captured from the beginning of the VET course into the world of hospitality work and beyond.

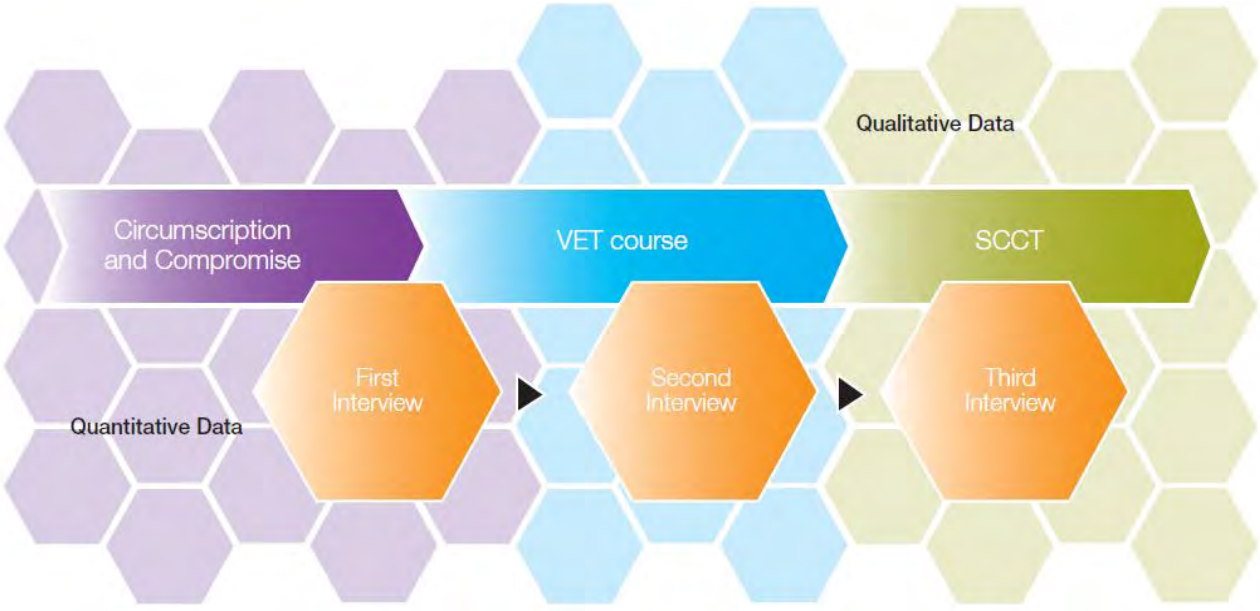
Narrative analysis in this case includes the consideration of the distortion of reality of hospitality work through "myths" (Denzin, 1986:199). These myths give an insight into the social context in which decisions of occupations are made and how they changed. In this context, myth means that which is created within a communication system and is part of a culture that is a "semiotic linguistic production" whose meaning can be deconstructed and traced back to audiences and authors (Denzin, 1986:195). In other words, signs, symbols and language carry with them a story of a particular culture that may not be based on an objective reality. In this case it is the language and perpetuated stories associated with work in the hospitality industry; the authors being industry players and VET teachers and the audience being VET students or prospective employees (e.g. "it's long hours and poor conditions, but you can travel and have fun"). As will become evident later in this thesis, the myths of hospitality work are uncovered over time to reveal a different participant perspective on their occupational choice.

Whilst the stories the participants told were always framed in the experience and unique context of the individual, they rested on the learning sequences that had been socially defined during primary and secondary socialisation (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gottfredson, 1981). The stories gave an insight into the means of arriving at an occupational choice (e.g. occupational choice based on a perception of occupational status or love of the job). Interpretation of these stories was framed using the theories of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory. These theories were particularly important when considering the role of others in the participants' social space and the comparison of the reality and the myths of hospitality work to the initial perceptions of participants. The stories

participants created were socially constructed (Durkheim, 1938; Lindesmith et al., 1977; Randall & Martin, 2003). This current research has identified the journey of people who decided to stay in hospitality: moving from secondary socialisation into a place of tertiary socialisation or the workplace environment. The stories that participants told about their VET training and early career experiences, compared with their original expectations or aspirations, provides a time-bound indication of the psychological and social machinations experienced on the journey to making an occupational decision.

The following model illustrates how the interview schedule coincided with the participants' move through the VET course and into the workforce or into further study. This model also indicates how the research schedule relates to the theoretical framework (i.e. Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory). An indication of how quantitative research tools underpin the qualitative data and how both methods fit with the research program over time is also illustrated.

Figure 6. Data collection framework



The qualitative and quantitative methods and tools used in this research are now discussed in further detail.

3.5 *Qualitative research tools*

3.5.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were used in the current research to ascertain opinion, belief, expectation and occupational intention through the iterative stories of individuals undertaking a hospitality VET course. The in-depth interview lends itself to an interpretive process of data gathering and analysis (Babbie, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Dick, 1990; Ezzy, 2001; Neuman, 2000). Allowing subjects to tell their own story and give their own accounts of their expectations, beliefs, intentions and values in their move towards making an occupational choice follows the theory that individuals construct their own reality from interaction with their environment (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Bandura, 2004; Ezzy, 2001; Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Telling stories also allows a determination of sequence and provides a connection to the past or distant experiences, and are mnemonics that enable the reconstruction of complex events or beliefs (Blustein, Palladino Schultheiss & Flum, 2004; Bujold, 2004; Hummel, 1991) from which the data were drawn.

Structured in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to probe the interviewee for detailed information in order to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of occupational decision making (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Wass & Wells, 1994). Interview questions were predetermined and were exploratory in nature allowing for greater depth and expanse of response to address the research questions. So too, predetermining questions ensured that all subjects were asked the same core questions, thus fortifying the reliability of the interview process (Babbie, 2002; Black and Champion, 1976). However, to further

explore issues or topics raised by individuals, follow-up exploratory questions were used to uncover further data. Both face-to-face and telephone interview methods were used in this investigation. Face-to-face interviews were preferred and conducted where possible as they afford an opportunity to develop a trusting relationship between participant and interviewer, thus encouraging greater levels of disclosure. Face-to-face contact also provides for the interpretation and follow-up on non-verbal cues during the interview.

The validity of questions was tested by conducting pilot interviews (Black and Champion, 1976; Neuman, 2000; Ticehurst & Veal, 1999) with five students of a similar age to the research participants. These students were asked to take part in the pilot study to determine how the interview questions would be perceived and understood by participants. Questions were read to the pilot participants and adjustments to the wording of questions were made based on their feedback. For example, the term „self-efficacy' was replaced with „confidence' and the formal nature or presentation of questions was replaced with a more relaxed, conversational tone (see Appendix M1).

Following the pilot, the research interviews followed an informal interview technique to put both interviewer and interviewee on a similar power level so that the subject was not just a „passive vessel of answers' (Black & Champion, 1976; Holstein & Gubrium in Weinberg, 2002). Participants were active participants in developing knowledge and answers to the research questions in that they were able to lead the researcher to ask follow-up questions and provide illustrative examples and stories to elaborate on standard questions. Also, the use of the interview as a data collection method necessitated an understanding of the language or „code' through which participants communicated and the context in which they were working (i.e. the hospitality environment) (Polkinghorne, 1988). In this case, the researcher had a 20 year personal working background in the hospitality industry that spanned small restaurants

to international hotels and operational jobs through to upper management roles. This practical experience was augmented by teaching experience in the VET sector both at TAFE and in an on-the-job capacity. This deep and varied experience of the hospitality workplace and teaching environment provided for a well-developed understanding of the hospitality idiolect and assisted with the accurate interpretation of the stories of participants during the series of interviews.

3.5.2 The interview series

There were three rounds of in-depth structured interviews corresponding with the timing of transition from secondary school student, to secondary college student, to worker (or continuing student at Year 12 or university). Thus, the longitudinal nature of the research program allowed the iterative cognitive process of occupational decision making present in both the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory to be investigated.

During the first interviews, in-depth interviews were undertaken with participants at their secondary college in a private space away from other college activity (in a vacant classroom area or annex) and lasted for approximately 45 minutes each. Immediately prior to interview, all participants were asked to complete a questionnaire template (see Appendix M2) that gathered demographic data (e.g. name, age, suburb of residence) and family-related data (e.g. occupations of parents and siblings). This data was then discussed in the interview and in some cases formed the basis of further questioning (e.g. "Your father is a mechanic. Do you think that's a good job?") (see Appendix M3 for interview questions). This was where the first incidence of attrition was experienced. Across all secondary colleges, nine students who indicated their interest did not attend the first interview.

Given exposure to a hospitality workplace it was expected that participants would have developed a greater level of knowledge of hospitality work through formal training and work placements. Therefore, the second round of interviews, held toward the end of the school year and the end of the VET course (October to November), was designed to identify changes in participant attitudes to their chosen hospitality occupation since the first round interview. The second in-depth interviews were conducted at each secondary college in class time and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Those participants who were unable to personally attend the second-round interview were asked to participate in a telephone interview. Of the 61 original interview participants, five (8 per cent) were unable to be contacted; three participants did not answer the telephone call despite four attempts; one participant was not contactable by telephone; and one participant had left secondary college and her whereabouts were unknown.

As participants had completed their hospitality VET course and were either in the workforce, engaged in further study or were unemployed and seeking employment, the third round of interviews was conducted by telephone. The third interviews were designed to determine occupational choice given exposure to hospitality work proper. The rationale for participants maintaining or changing an occupational choice/aspiration was also gathered at this interview. This was the point at which most attrition was expected due to a possible transition into the workforce and possibly out of contact. Of the initial 61 participants, 49 (80.3 per cent) completed the third and final round of interviews. This represents an attrition rate of 19.6 per cent over the course of the research program. Attrition, also known as mortality, is a characteristic of panel studies and varies widely (Babbie, 2002; Bergman & Magnusson in Magnusson & Bergman, 1990; Neuman, 2000; Ridder in Hartog, Ridder & Theeuwes, 1990; Janson in Schulsinger, Mednick & Knop, 1981). Research programs using

this method experience attrition of between 20 per cent and 60 per cent (Ridder in Hartog et al., 1990).

In regard to data gathering tools, all interviews were tape recorded onto audio tape for transcription and subsequent analysis. Standard printed questionnaire templates were given to each participant at the first interview to gather standard background data (e.g. age, parental occupation and place of residence). Handwritten notes were also made of salient points during the interview to augment the audio tapes (see Appendix M2 and M3 for interview questions and questionnaire templates).

3.5.3 Qualitative data organisation

Once the three rounds of interviews had been transcribed from audio tape, the transcripts were manually read through and analysed so that major themes and issues could be identified. This was achieved by physically highlighting and noting common responses to interview questions. For example, the rationale given for contemplating an occupation in hospitality and the experiences of the workplace emerged as general themes. Each participant's first-, second- and third-round interviews were collated in hard copy form and reviewed manually (as explained above) and in order of interview. By reading each participant's interview transcripts in chronological order, salient points regarding such topics as occupational aspiration, rationale for occupational choice, perceptions of occupational status and occupational outcome became apparent and were noted. A template was devised to capture notes on major themes that emerged from this manual examination of the interview data in response to each of the research questions whilst allowing the capture of general notes on the individual's story over the course of the interviews (see Appendix M4). Reviewing the data in this manner was invaluable as it allowed total immersion in each participant's story from

beginning to end, rather than as disparate pieces of data. Once this was achieved the transcripts were coded with QSR International's NVivo 8® software. This software was identified as an appropriate tool for data organisation as it is able to categorise narrative data whilst supporting an inductive method of data analysis.

As a first-stage process, the transcript data were manipulated into appropriate descriptive categories (tree nodes or free nodes) in line with the initial emergent themes as discussed by participants. This was achieved by using pattern matching of themes from the data. That is, recurring patterns were noted to consolidate individual facets of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) into coherent themes. This process was augmented by clustering data that had similar characteristics (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and this informed the way in which data were coded. Tree nodes were created for themes that had sub-themes such as reasons for aspirations to an occupation in hospitality (e.g. love of cooking, aspirations for travel). Each transcript was initially coded by interview; that is, all first interviews were coded together, then the second and then the third in turn. This allowed like themes to emerge given a common context (e.g. start of the VET course). Free nodes were created where participants discussed an issue or topic that, whilst relevant to the research questions, may not have been shared by other participants. Over the course of coding of all transcripts, some free nodes became tree nodes given the emergence of common themes or issues (e.g. the importance of relationships in the workplace or comments made by workplace colleagues regarding hospitality work). Subsequent second and third rounds of inductive data coding was undertaken to identify where alternative emergent themes and issues were found, particularly where they diverged from the interview questions as asked (e.g. rationale for staying in a poor-paying job).

Coded data were then organised again through a process of pattern matching into more ordered forms of tree nodes as themes became more clear due to identifiable commonality across participants, with some themes falling into a logical order or category; for example, data on rationale for occupational aspiration were originally sorted into free nodes, then some were organised again into tree nodes (see Appendix M5 and M6 for a representation of the organisation of tree and free nodes). This iterative process supported an inductive process over time with a gradual reduction in the volume of data to be analysed to a more focused, organised and relevant data set from which clear themes and commonalities (and disparities) emerged. The collation of these commonalities and disparities forms the basis of the response to the research questions which appears in the Findings chapter. Miles and Huberman (1994) identify this process as one of making conceptual or theoretical coherence. That is, once evidence is derived from the data, patterns identifying relationships or divergence can be examined to inform new or confirm existing theory.

3.5.4 Qualitative data analysis – content & narrative analysis

This research employed content and narrative analysis as the foundation for qualitative data analysis, which is inductive in nature. There are perceived inherent difficulties in moving „backwards and forwards' between data and the denial of the „big science' concept of universal generalisability of such a process. However, a constructivist method such as this allows the researcher to come to an understanding of the phenomenon of occupational decision making through interaction with the data (Charmaz, 2006); essentially, the inductive method fosters reflection on interpretations of data of both the researcher and participants (Glaser, 1992; Taylor in Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001; Williamson, 2006). To make sense of the stories from participants, content and narrative analyses were used.

Content analysis is a means of analysing a body of literature which becomes a focus of the research itself and was, in this case, supported by the use of the NVivo® software (Miller & Brewer, 2003; Ticehurst & Veal, 1999) as previously discussed. This form of analysis, suitable for testing or contextualising postulates of existing theory (Ezzy, 2002), was used to compare and contrast the experiences and opinions of subjects of this study with the theories of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory. This was achieved by identifying where comments were made in regard to particular themes as defined by individual nodes (e.g. perceptions of occupational status, reasons for aspiring to a hospitality occupation and perceptions of self-efficacy). Themes are considered to be more salient where more comments are made, thus encouraging further investigation around that topic. As this method of analysis tends to be more quantitative in approach (i.e. measuring the occurrences of certain phases or topics) it was coupled with narrative analysis by clustering (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Narrative analysis is qualitative in its approach as it examines the complex tapestry of stories that participants have shared to illustrate their opinions, experiences and expectations during their journey to making an occupational choice. It aims to make explicit the constructions of meaning that individuals bring to perceptions of their reality. This is achieved through the use of psychological phenomena that create meaning: organising knowledge and experience and embodiments of values and subjectivities that are expressed as forms of discourse (Cortazzi, 1993; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1971; Polkinghorn, 1988). This was achieved by interpreting the narrative or stories of each participant. Comments pertaining to certain topics were analysed as a group. For example, once coding was complete, a thorough re-examination of the data within each node was made with attention to narrative that appeared to be repeated by different participants, but in different words (e.g. “I

know it's going to be hard, but I love the work", "I don't care about how hard it is, this is what I want to do"). This analysis provided the basis of the responses to the research questions.

Narrative analysis allowed this study to move away from the „what' of events (e.g. occupational decision making, work experience) to focus on the process of sense making that participants journeyed through to reconcile their aspirations, expectations and knowledge with their actual experiences and decisions (Bryman, 2004; Cohen, Duberley & Mallon, 2004; Denzin, 1986; Webb & Mallon, 2007; Weick, 1995; Taylor in Wetherell et al., 2001). This provided valuable insight into how the participants created order of their own experiences and knowledge, capturing the change over time. That is, from the initial interview to the final interview and the initial occupational choice, to a decision to remain in that occupation or choose another.

3.6 *Quantitative research tools*

3.6.1 Background demographic and socioeconomic data

As Gottfredson (1981) argues, the social class of the individual is an early determinant of occupational choice. Socioeconomic background, as one of the determinants of class, is shown in the literature to be a factor in occupational choice (Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2002; Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Scott, 2004; Thompson & Subich, 2006). It underpins Gottfredson's (1981) argument that perceived social class is a fundamental contributor to the development of the individual's „zone of acceptable alternatives'. Therefore, background data of participants was imperative in contextualising qualitative data gathered. Participant questionnaires collected information including most significant place of residence (to determine socioeconomic background) and data regarding their family (e.g. parental

occupation). These data were gathered via a standard questionnaire template to determine participant underpinning social characteristics. These data were entered into a simple MS Excel® spreadsheet to enable comparison and contrast of the backgrounds of those entering into a VET course, as well as providing a retrospective data set for reference. The use of these data is explained further below.

The socioeconomic background of participants was estimated by using the Socio-Economic Index for Areas indicator tool (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001), thus providing rigour to an assessment of socioeconomic backgrounds of individuals. This data set is drawn from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing and is used as a fundamental data set in the study of populations in Australia. Among other indicators it illustrates the relative advantage and disadvantage of areas (taking into account variables such as family income levels, educational attainment and people in skilled occupations) in Australia and as such allows an interrogation of socially based factors across the population. These data were manipulated by postcode and then applied to the residence data given by participants and added to the spreadsheet. This identified the socioeconomic stratification of participants which was analysed in tandem with the qualitative data. So too, the SEIFA data, as matched to the residential areas of participants, provided an indication of socioeconomic status of groups of participants sorted by secondary college. This provided quantitative evidence in regard to the average socioeconomic background of each secondary college cohort, and therefore comparisons across secondary colleges could be made as well as by individual participant. Whilst postcode/place of residence is not necessarily an absolute indicator of relative socioeconomic background, measures of relative advantage or disadvantage can illustrate a link between place of residence of an individual and their likely socioeconomic background (Baum, 2006; Baum, Haynes, Van Gellecum & Han, 2006).

3.6.2 Determining occupational status

Occupational status of individuals is important to understand when researching occupational choice. Occupational status represents a decision-making factor both in terms of the perceived limitations individuals place upon themselves and the parental influence exercised during the period of time individuals are devising their ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' (Gottfredson, 1981; Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2002; Spenner & Featherman, 1978; Turner & Lapan, 2002). That is, individuals will divest certain occupations based on their understanding of occupational status; a job may be too low in status for them to consider or too high for them to aspire to given their understanding of internal or external factors such as self-efficacy or access to education (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Bandura, 2001b: Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004; Scott, 2004). Using the Australian occupation status measurement tool ANU4 (Jones & McMillan, 2001), occupations of parents can be determined in terms of relative status to other occupations. Based on measurement and analysis of educational attainment and income, the scale represents a useful and widely accepted index to determine both the socioeconomic and occupational status of individuals. The measure also provides opportunities to make predictions about the occupational options available to offspring. For example, the literature suggests that if one comes from a low socioeconomic background and both parents have low-rated occupations, it is unlikely that offspring will choose a very high-rated occupation (Bandura, 2001b; Gottfredson, 1981; Graetz & McAllister, 1994; Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2002; Marjoribanks, 1996; Marks, 2009). This is due to limitation of opportunity as well as socially constructed constraints such as perceived class restrictions. The ANU4 status scale adds quantitative rigour to the research in that it provides a clear and well-recognised measurement with which to contextualise more rich qualitative data such as narrative data collected during interviews.

It is important to note that the ANU4 status scale was updated to reflect the 2006 Australian Census data which produce the updated measure AUSEI06. These measures are correlated at 0.98 and are therefore virtually indistinguishable (McMillan, Beavis & Jones, 2009). It was therefore decided to retain the same scale as had been applied since the beginning of the research program (i.e. ANU4). During the first round of interviews participants were asked to identify their perceived occupational status rating for each of their parents' occupations on a continuum represented on a one to ten scale (one being the „worst' job and ten being the „best'). In the same way, they were then asked to rate their own occupational aspiration or choice (e.g. chef, waiter, hotel manager). These data were then converted from a one to ten scale to a format that correlated with the format of the ANU4 ratings which appear as a one to one hundred scale (e.g. a rating of 5.5 became a rating of 55). This allowed for clearer comparison of ratings. Each participant's ratings were added to the spreadsheet and the differential between their perceived rating and that of the ANU4 rating was calculated. From these data the accuracy or otherwise of perceptions of occupational status was derived. This process was repeated at the third interview to determine any change in perception of occupational status of participants' own occupational choice given training and experience of the hospitality workplace. These data also provided an indication of the actual average parental occupational status as defined by the ANU4 by secondary college groups. When this was compared with the average SEIFA rankings of college groups, correlations between average parental occupational status and socioeconomic background could be determined. This provided a foundation and context to the qualitative data, especially in regard to responding to the research question relating to status factors.

3.7 *Defence of mixed method*

The mixed method approach denies the premise that the scientific method should exist exclusively in either a qualitative or quantitative camp that is constrained by the shortcomings of an adherence to a purist technique (Leahey, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Whilst a mixed method procedure has been somewhat disparaged for its "whatever it takes" approach (Leahey, 2007; Shank, 2006), adherence to one particular paradigm must surely give way to a pragmatic attitude that seeks to answer research questions in the best and most appropriate way possible (Kelle, 2006; Morse, Niehaus, Wolfe & Wilkins, 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003; Weinberg, 2002).

This current research aimed to study the complex phenomenon of occupational decision making of hospitality VET students. Therefore, conversations and questioning over time was used to uncover observations, experiences and attributed meanings to events experienced by the participants. Whilst qualitative studies are inherently complex, heterogeneous and unique, they offer insight into social phenomena such as occupational decision making the in a specific context of hospitality VET students (Borman, Le Compte & Goetz, 1986; Miller & Brewer, 2003; Kelle, 2006). Therefore, quantitative methods, such as questionnaires to gather background demographic data, were employed. These augmented the qualitative data and provided a level of rigour and validity. This is especially so in this case as background data provided context and a foundation to the qualitative data. In this current research the quantifiable responses derived from written self-administered questionnaires complement the qualitative data gathered from structured in-depth interviews. Both methods have utility here: they create a synergy that adds depth and rigour to the research outcomes by blending inductive and deductive methods (Black and Champion, 1976; Morse et al., 2006). The nuances and iterative cognitive processes undertaken by participants in their move from

student to hospitality worker, and perhaps in their move to some other occupation or further education, are illustrated via a mixed method approach.

3.8 *Summary*

This chapter described the method by which this research was conducted in line with the research context and to respond appropriately to the research questions. The reasoning for using a longitudinal approach was provided and the mechanism for generating an appropriate sample was described. An introduction to the participants and an indication of both the qualitative and quantitative research tools were discussed. The use of a mixed method was defended as providing appropriate qualitative depth and quantitative rigour to better respond to the research questions. The following chapter will present and discuss findings from the research program.

Chapter Four

Findings

4 Findings

4.1 *Family and occupational status and occupational choice*

4.1.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the demographic and socioeconomic data as well as participants' status perceptions of occupations. This chapter, therefore, will identify how „actual' and „perceived' occupational status influenced occupational decision making in this study's hospitality VET participants.

4.1.2 The data

The data were collected over the course of three interviews. The first was at the beginning of the participants' hospitality VET course, the second towards the end of the VET course and the final interview was conducted approximately six months after the completion of the hospitality VET course. The longitudinal approach allowed investigation of changes in occupational aspiration and perceptions of a hospitality occupation over time. The three interviews collected both qualitative and quantitative data. A brief description of the data gathered at each interview follows (see Table 2).

Table 2. Indication of data collected by interview

	Quantitative Data Collected	Quantitative Data Collected
First Interview	Demographic data Participant status rating of parental occupation Participant status rating of chosen hospitality occupation Parental occupation	Rationale for choosing hospitality work Other possible occupational choices Information used to make choice Family's/friends' opinion of a hospitality occupation Familial support of occupation choice Understanding of hospitality work conditions Career aspirations Contingency plan (other occupational options)
Second Interview	Participant status rating of chosen hospitality occupation	Occupation choice – changed/unchanged? Assessment of accuracy of information used to make original choice of occupation Assessment of workplace experiences Family's/friends' opinion of hospitality work Familial support of occupation choice Understanding of hospitality work conditions (changed/unchanged) Career aspirations (changed/unchanged) Contingency plan (other occupational options)
Third Interview	Participant status rating of chosen hospitality occupation	Occupation choice – changed/unchanged? Aspects of work that maintain commitment to a hospitality occupation/aspects that caused a change to hospitality occupation choice Family's/friends' support Understanding of hospitality work conditions (changed/unchanged) Occupational intention Contingency plan (other occupational options) Perceptions of own social class Perceptions of hospitality/new occupation social class

4.1.3 Establishing the Gottfredson „zone of acceptable alternatives'

The first interview was designed to provide a baseline set of quantitative and qualitative data. The participants' decision to enter a hospitality occupation and undertake hospitality vocational training was also investigated. Data collected at the first interview included demographic data, parental occupation and rationale for choosing a hospitality occupation (see Table 2). This baseline data was particularly important in regard to establishing both a social profile of each of the participants (social status) and unearthing the rationale for choosing a hospitality occupation (interest). These two elements (social status and interest) inform the development of the ‚zones of acceptable alternatives', as described in the Theory

of Circumscription and Compromise, for each of the participants. Whilst baseline quantitative data was collected at the first interview, discussions regarding social status and interest continued across all interviews.

The following findings provide insight into the influence of social status and the first two research sub-questions:

RQ1a: How does the family of origin impact on occupational decision making by hospitality VET students?

RQ1b: How does the status of hospitality work impact on occupational decision making by hospitality VET students?

4.1.4 Parental occupational status – its place in occupational decision making of hospitality VET students

The individuals' perceptions of the status of occupations (often viewed in comparison to other occupations) provide a means of narrowing occupational options. As described in the literature review, occupational roles are one of the most visible indicators of social class and, therefore, individuals will choose to pursue occupations that they believe are consistent with their perception of their own social class or that which is considered to be attainable or accessible. They will also have a view of the status of parental occupation.

To gain a benchmark of participants' perceptions of occupational status, participants were asked to rate both their own occupational choice as well as their parents' occupations. This was achieved by having participants indicate on a continuum where they considered their parents' jobs to be between „the best of all jobs' at one end and „the worst of all jobs' at the other. The continuum equated to a ten point scale with one (1) being the „worst' job and ten (10) representing the „best'. These ratings were then recalculated to mirror the 100-point scale of the ANU4 status scale for comparison to the occupational status benchmark.

Differences in ratings were measured to identify how participants perceived and rated the occupational status against the ANU4 scale.

4.1.5 Participants' perception parental occupational status ratings

When asked to rate their parents' occupations, participants' ratings varied widely from that stated in the ANU4 status scale (scale=0–100). On average, those participants who had a father or stepfather (n=50) provided overrated scores for their father's occupation with an average overstating of occupational status of 12.1 on the applicable ANU4 scale. However, when participant ratings are viewed individually, ratings varied widely from -34.7 to +58 compared to the applicable ANU4 rating, with 36 per cent of ratings being understated (i.e. participants viewed their father's occupation less favourably in status terms than indicated by the ANU4 scale) (see Appendix Table AF1). This suggests that participants' perceptions of their father's occupation in terms of occupational status deviate widely from the ANU4 status scale.

Participants rated their mother's (or stepmother's) occupation (n=52) more closely to the ANU4 status scales with an overall average positive deviation of 5.3. However, 46 per cent of the participants understated their mother's occupational status when applied to the external benchmark. Ratings again varied widely from -62.6 to +79.1 (see Appendix Table AF1). Whilst, on average, participants were more likely to return a rating much closer to the average ANU4 rating for their mother's occupation than their father's, individually they were more likely to underrate their mother's occupation. Also, the span of divergence from the ANU4 status scale was much broader (i.e. -62.6 to +79.1) for mothers' occupations than fathers' (see Table F5). This indicates that participants' perception of status for their mother's occupation was less accurate for that of their father's. Overall, this data suggests

that participants have widely varying perceptions of occupational status of their parents' occupations when compared with benchmark data of the ANU4 status scale.

4.1.6 Place of residence as a socioeconomic indicator

Whilst the construct of social class was not conceptualised or verbalised well by individuals in this sample, Gottfredson (1981) suggests that it forms a basis of occupational decision making and contributes to the emergence of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' for individuals. As previously identified, in this thesis, class is indicated in part by socioeconomic background and occupational status. To augment participants' perception of occupational status, and to identify a factor social class from another perspective, the residential area in which participants lived was used as an indicator of their socioeconomic status. This data was part of the baseline demographic data gathered at the first interview.

Socioeconomic status can be identified by using the highly credible, ABS generated, Social Economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) data scale (ABS, 2001) which illustrates the relative advantage to disadvantage for residential areas. Higher scoring suburbs are recognised as areas of advantage, and lower scoring suburbs areas of disadvantage. Individuals from a higher socioeconomic background will usually live in areas of higher advantage. Socioeconomic background is known to have an influence on occupational decision making, especially in transition from school (college in this case) to work (Graetz & McAllister, 1994; Lindstrom et al., 2007).

As the study included participants from two private colleges, three Catholic colleges and six publicly funded senior secondary colleges from around Tasmania, some variation in socioeconomic status of participants was expected to be captured. To illustrate the variation

in socioeconomic background of participants, as indicated by socioeconomic status of residential areas, applicable SEIFA scores were applied to each participant's suburb of residence. To find an average participant residential area score, individual SIEFA scores of participants' residential areas were sorted by college and then averaged (see Table 3).

Table 3. SEIFA scores of participant place of residence and ranking in college groups

Participants' College Group	Participant average residential SEIFA score	n = Participants
HS	1082.10	5
SM	983.37	2
RC	978.81	8
GC	969.55	4
HC	965.64	8
LC	959.02	5
HL	909.03	8
D	908.05	9
STM	897.79	4
SP	891.79	1
CC	878.80	7

Key:
Private colleges
Public colleges
Catholic colleges

(Data source: SEIFA (ABS, 2001))

When individual participant's scores were sorted into college groups, it was found that five of the 11 colleges fall below both the average and median socioeconomic rankings for Tasmania, indicating lower relative socioeconomic status. Both private colleges returned rankings above both the median and average rankings for Tasmania, and closer than all other colleges toward the highest SEIFA score for the state as a whole (indicating higher socioeconomic status).

In terms of the proportion of participants represented in lower than average/median socioeconomic areas, 47.5 per cent (n=29) fall into those five college groups that fall below both the state average and median socioeconomic rankings.

Therefore, almost half of the participants in this study can be identified as residing in areas with a lower socioeconomic status (see Table 4). This may indicate that given a lower socioeconomic background, individuals will maintain aspirations to occupations with a lower occupational status.

Table 4. Participant average SEIFA scores by college, compared to Tasmanian scores

College	Participant Average SEIFA (socioeconomic) Score	College to Tas. Median (+/-)	College to Tas. Average (+/-)	n = Participant
HS	1082.10	169.65	151.45	5
SM	983.37	70.92	52.72	2
RC	978.81	66.36	48.16	8
GC	969.55	57.10	38.90	4
HC	965.64	53.19	34.99	8
LC	959.02	46.58	28.38	5
HL	909.03	-3.42	-21.62	8
D	908.05	-4.39	-22.59	9
STM	897.79	-14.66	-32.86	4
SP	891.79	-20.66	-38.86	1
CC	878.80	-33.65	-51.85	7

Tasmania Highest Score	1146.94
Tasmania Lowest Score	789.75
Tasmania Average Score	930.65
Tasmania Median Score	912.45

Private colleges
Public colleges
Catholic colleges

(Data source: SEIFA (ABS, 2001))

4.1.7 Occupational status and socioeconomic status

Both socioeconomic status (as defined by the socioeconomic status of place of residence) and occupational status (as defined by the perceptions of one's occupational role) are visible and accepted means of defining an individual's place in society. Together, they provide a means for individuals to divest occupations from the „zone of acceptable alternatives' in order to arrive at occupational options that are deemed to be suitable and attractive.

To investigate the comparison between parental occupations and residential socioeconomic ranking, the SEIFA scores for participants' residential areas were averaged to find an average ranking for each college group. These rankings range from one (1) with the highest SEIFA score (i.e. area of highest economic advantage and socioeconomic status) to 11 (i.e. area of lowest economic advantage and socioeconomic status). These rankings were compared with rankings of average parental occupational scores for each college as per the ANU4 and participants' scores for their hospitality occupational choice (see Table 5)[3].

Table 5. SEIFA rankings against parental and participant occupation rankings by college group

College	SEIFA (Socioeconomic) Ranking	Average ANU4 Participant Occ. Ranking	Average ANU4 Parental Occ. Ranking
HS	1	1	1
RC	2	7	5
SM	3	4	8
HC	4	10	11
STM	5	2	2
LC	6	9	10
GC	7	6	3
HL	8	5	7
D	9	8	9
SP	10	3	4
CC	11	11	6

The only match between socioeconomic ranking and participant occupational choice rankings appeared at colleges ranked at numbers one and 11. This indicates that whilst at the extremes there is a correspondence between participant occupational choice and the college average

[3] For the purpose of this calculation, parents with no occupation or those engaged in home duties were given a value of „0' to derive a more accurate college average value/ranking.

residential area socioeconomic ranking, there is no correspondence for other colleges, suggesting that occupational status and socioeconomic status of place of residence do not necessarily correspond.

This is further illustrated when occupational choices of participants are interrogated. In the highest ranked college group (by SEIFA ranking), three of the five participants (60 per cent) indicated an occupational choice in a managerial occupation which carries a higher ANU4 occupational status rating; whereas for the lowest ranked college group (by SEIFA ranking), only one in seven (14 per cent) identified a managerial occupation aspiration. The other six participants from this college identified „cook' or „pastry cook' as their occupational aspiration indicating a prima facie relationship between occupational aspiration and socioeconomic status at the extremes. However, whilst there may be some relationship between socioeconomic ranking and occupational rankings, there is little to indicate that this is a common relationship across all participants across all colleges and economic areas. Therefore, where one lives and what one does as a job does not necessarily provide a consolidated indication of overall social status, except at the extremes of this sample.

4.1.8 Parental support as a moderator of occupational status perception

Parental support of the occupational choices of their children contributes to occupational decision making and is moderated by their own (parental) occupational status and socioeconomic background. At each interview in the series, the topic of parental support for participants' occupational choice was discussed. Whilst parents of participants had reportedly made suggestions regarding occupational choice, parental input or support was not salient for participants in general, and there were some indications that participants

discounted the comments and/or opinions of their parents where it disagreed with their own aspirations. For example:

> I think my father thinks I could be doing better things but I don't really care....I could be doing business management and that sort of thing. (HS1 1st Interview)

Transcript data across all interviews suggests that there was a generally positive stance towards having a job, but „hands off" approach from parents in respect to specific jobs (60 positive responses); parents were supportive but not directly involved in occupational decision making of participants. Twelve comments, however, were perceived as negative reactions from parents to a hospitality occupation aspiration, and eight of these indicated that parents believed that a different occupational choice could be made. For example:

> ... they were a little bit sceptical about it, they go "well isn't there something else that you can do ... shouldn't you go into a business side of things, should you try something else other than hospitality", otherwise they get an idea that it's kind of lower, I think they just want me to try to achieve a bit. (LC3 1st Interview)
>
> ... and she [Mum] wanted me to come back to school next year and do a VET hairdressing course ... (HC2 2nd Interview)
>
> Like Mum was a bit unsure of why I wanted to go into hospitality. I think she would prefer me in the tourism industry. (HL3 2nd Interview)

Conversely, three parental comments suggested that the participant was "aiming a bit high" in regard to their occupational choice, and one was disappointed that the participant was not joining the family business.

> Well, my dad thinks I'm aiming a bit high. (HC1 1st Interview)
>
> Oh, Dad thinks I'm aiming too high in the things I want to do. (HC6 1st Interview)

> My dad really wants me to work for him. (HS4 2nd Interview)

Of the 105 relevant comments across all three sets of interviews, 34 comments suggested that parents were "happy" as long as the occupational choice made their son/daughter "happy".

> They just reckon as long as I'm happy with what I'm doing then they're happy. (HL1 1st Interview)
>
> Mum reckons if it makes me happy then why not go for it. (HC5 1st Interview)
>
> They said as long as I am working and enjoying what I am doing it is fine with them. (RC3 3rd Interview)

Thirty-four comments relating to parental support suggested a largely disengaged approach by parents in regard to occupational decision making of their children. Whilst comments indicated that some parents had differing status perceptions regarding the occupational choice of their son/daughter and therefore stated a value judgement regarding a hospitality occupation (e.g. "you're aiming a bit high", or "you could do better"), there was little in the way of persuasive argument to make the participant change their occupational choice.

4.1.9 Participants' occupational status ratings of their own hospitality occupational choices

Participants were asked to rate their own hospitality occupational choice (e.g. chef, hotel manager, waiter). Again, participants were asked to identify on a continuum where they considered their chosen occupation to be between the „the best of all jobs' at one end and „the worst of all jobs' at the other. The continuum equated to a ten-point scale with one (1) being the „worst' job and ten (10) representing the „best'. These ratings were then recalculated to mirror the 100-point scale of the ANU4 status scale for comparison to the occupational status benchmark. When rating their own occupational aspiration in regards to status, across all

available responses (n=53) the average of participants' ratings of their own occupational aspiration was 28.5 points above the ANU4 scale. Only 7 per cent of participants underrated their occupational choice against the ANU4, indicating that 93 per cent of participants overstated the occupational status rather than underrated it. Ratings deviated from the ANU4 status scale from -1.6 to +73.3. For example, one participant suggested that their chosen occupation of bar attendant rated at 100 on the 1–100 status scale. This equates to an overrating of occupational status by 73.3 points as the ANU4 rates that occupation at 26.7. This finding indicates that participants viewed their occupational aspiration as being of a higher status than as reported by the external status scale.

Table 6. Span of participant occupational ratings to ANU4 status ratings

	Average Participant Rating +/- from average ANU4 Rating	Span of Participant Ratings Deviation from ANU4 Ratings
Fathers' Occupations (n= 50)	+ 12.1 (overrated)	-34.7 to + 58
Mothers' Occupations (n= 52)	+ 5.3 (overrated)	-62.6 to +79.1
Participants' Occupational Aspiration (n=53)	+28.5 (overrated)	-1.6 to +73.3

To compare parental occupational status and participants' occupational choice status, the average ANU4 rating of parental occupations and participant occupational aspirations were calculated. The ANU4 rating average of all fathers' occupations (n=50) was 37.3 and the ANU4 average of all mothers' occupations (n=52) was 43.3[4]. The average of all participants'

[4] Only parents with a paid occupation were included in this calculation. Those with no occupation or home duties were not included.

occupational aspirations (n=53) rated lower than both parents' occupational ratings at 35.8 on the ANU4 status scale.

A greater proportion of participants underrated their parents' occupational status but overstated their own occupational choice status rating (see Table 6). On average, hospitality occupations rank lower than participants' parental occupational status and well below participants' perceived status ranking of their own occupational choice. However, hospitality occupations are perceived by participants to be of higher occupational status than they actually are (see Table 7) and higher than the perceived status of their own parents' occupations. This appears to contradict Gottfredson's (1981) assertion that perception of occupational status is somewhat universal and confounds the general expectation that social mobility aims upwards from generation to generation. Whilst participants here believe their occupational aspiration/choice to be higher than the occupational status of their parents, they are, on average, aspiring to occupations of a lower occupational status than their parents.

Table 7. Occupational status ratings

	Average Participant Rating	Average ANU4 Rating	Average Difference Between Participant Rating and ANU4	% Overrated by Participants
Fathers' Occupations (n= 50)	49.4	37.3	12.1	64%
Mothers' Occupations (n=52)	48.7	43.3	5.4	52%
Participants' Occupations (n = 53) 1st Interview	64.1	35.8	28.5	93%
Participants' Occupations (n = 41) 3rd Interview	70.6	35.6	34.8	98%

4.1.10 Change in perception of occupational status over time

The exploration of participants' perception of the status of their chosen hospitality occupation culminated at the third and final interview. The intention was to identify any change in occupational status perception over time given exposure to „work experience' in a hospitality occupation. Participants would then have a better understanding of hospitality work through vocational training and work placements.

As the final interviews were undertaken by phone, participants were asked to rate their perceptions of occupational status on a simple one to ten rating (one being perceived as the „worst job in the world', ten being „the best'). All but one participant overrated their original chosen hospitality occupation in comparison to the ANU4 scales (n=43). Even where the participants' ratings from the first interview were lower than the final participant rating, it was still higher than the ANU4 benchmark data. This indicates that even where participants decided not to remain in their chosen hospitality occupation (or had downwardly moderated their original perception rating), their final perception of occupational status remained higher than the external benchmark (see Table 7). Therefore, participants maintained a perception that hospitality occupations are of a higher occupational status than as defined by the ANU4 status scale.

Participants' ratings of their occupational choice from the first and third interviews were compared and it was found that the difference between participants' initial individual status ratings for their own occupational choice at the first and third interviews (n=43) varied from -3.2 to +50.7, with an overall average increase in rating of 3.85. This indicates that whilst some participants had moderated their perception of status of their chosen occupation downward below their original ranking (as much as 33.2 „points' for one participant), some

had increased the perception of their original occupational choice resulting in an overall average increase on original occupational status ratings of 3.85. Overall, the perceptions of the hospitality occupation had marginally increased between the time of the first interview and the final interview suggesting that, on average, participants perceived their occupational aspiration or choice to be better than originally thought.

However, when looking at this finding more closely, 41 per cent of all participants indicated a lower rating for their hospitality occupation. Of those participants who had changed their occupational choice to a non-hospitality occupation and who had decided against working in a hospitality occupation (n= 22), 68 per cent reported a lower status rating for their original hospitality occupation at the third interview than at the first. This indicates that the status perception of their original hospitality occupation had decreased. Of those remaining in a hospitality occupation, or completing further study in hospitality, 29 per cent had moderated their occupational status rating downward (see Appendix Table AF2). This suggests that those participants who indicated a likelihood of remaining in a hospitality occupation had a more positive occupational status perception than those who left work in hospitality.

4.1.11 Vocational education, socioeconomic status and possible limitations to occupational options

Hospitality education exists in the vocational education sector and is often believed to be less academically challenging than a university course of education. This is due to a mode of training delivery that subscribes to competency-based methods and assessment processes. That is, much is made of the practical application of skills rather than academic or theoretical approaches to learning and skills development.

The concept of vocational education being more attractive to non-academically inclined individuals is supported here by evidence suggesting few participants were planning on a university education after college. During the second interview, participants were asked about their college subjects to indentify the level of interest in/capacity to attend higher education. Of 59 responses regarding the completion of prerequisite subjects for university entrance, nine responses indicated an interest or capacity (due to attaining pre-tertiary subjects and/or adequate college results) to go on to university, nine responses indicated that the participant had completed pre-tertiary subjects but had no intention to go onto university, and 16 indicated that whilst university tertiary education was an option, the participant was unsure of their desire to attend university. Twenty-five responses indicated that no pre-tertiary subjects had been undertaken; effectively curtailing the opportunity to attend university immediately after college.

There is evidence to suggest that encouraging people into vocational education is linked to lower socioeconomic status and is indicative of a structural (if invisible) barrier to people making occupational choices outside their ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. This mirrors the phenomenon of decision making within one's own social scope of experience:

> They (parents) like it, they know I enjoy it more, they're pretty much the same as me, my family. None of us are really huge on brains. (SM2 1st Interview)
>
> ...all through high school I was pretty much either a chef or hairdressing. I just wanted to see what one that I wanted to do. And now I've sort of realised that they've both got down points and they're both not really, I suppose if you become good at what you do you can get lots of money and stuff but they're both not really something – and I don't want to go to uni or anything because I don't really like school that much, so I sort of don't want a job that I have to do a lot for. I want a job that I like doing, that I don't have to do much to do it. (HC2 1st Interview)

Two participants identified that university was their preferred pathway into a hospitality occupation (hotel management). Both were educated at the highest ranked college by socioeconomic advantage (previously identified in Table 5). This is consistent with suggestions that university entrants are more likely to be from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. This evidence also suggests that hospitality VET students are not likely to identify a higher education pathway that might offer broader opportunity to access professional occupations with higher ANU4 status ratings. Vocational education in hospitality at college level is aimed at trade/operational, largely „blue collar', occupations that are identified in the lower ranks of the occupational status (ANU4) scale.

4.1.12 Narrowing occupational options

The narrowing of options can also be illustrated by identifying the contingency occupational aspirations espoused by participants. Contingency plans were discussed in all interviews in response to the question of what participants would do if they found that their chosen hospitality occupation was not suitable or if they didn't like it. Of the 26 participants that identified alternative occupational plans at the first interview, all but seven identified roles of a similar occupational status to hospitality. For example:

> Maybe go to a different, I don't know, like **tour guiding** from TAFE and get into the tourism side of it. (RC7 1st Interview)
>
> Yeah, and because I did hospitality VET this year, I thought in year 12 I can always do VET **hairdressing.** (HC2 1st Interview)

In regard to the occupational options put forward by those participants who did identify an occupational alternative to their first choice of a hospitality occupation, it was found that most alternatives existed within a similar ANU4 status range. Table 8 identifies the occupation, the corresponding ANU4 rating and the resultant occupational outcome of the

participant. (By way of comparison, sample hospitality occupations and ratings are identified in the lower rows of the table.)

Table 8. Occupational alternatives and status ratings

Identified Occupational Alternative at 1st Interview	Number of Responses	Number Participants Taking Up their Stated Occupational Alternative	ANU4 Rating
Nursing (enrolled nurse)	1	0	51.2
Tour guide	1	0	44.1
Armed forces cook	2	1	32.1
Hairdresser	3	0, 1 missing	32.8
Front of house/tourism (unspecified)	4	0, 1 missing	36.4
Photographer	2	0	63
Mechanical occupation	1	0	33
Sales	1	0	27.4
Artist – unspecified	1	0	63
Interior designer	1	0	63
Tug boat work	1	Missing	27.3
Butcher	1	0	24.1
Massage therapist	1	Missing	51.2
Journalist	1	0	74.8
Police officer	3	3 missing	48.5
Navy – unspecified	1	0	Not defined
Cheesemaker	1	0	24.1
	26		
		Chef	*32.1*
		Bar attendant	*26.7*
		Hotel Manager	*40.5*
*missing = did not complete the suite of interviews			

Only seven participants (27 per cent) suggested that they would opt for an occupation in the upper half of the ANU4 rating scale or what would be classed as a ‚professional' occupation. None of those had taken up their higher status second choice by the time of the third interview.

At the final interview participants were asked about their current occupational plans and contingency plans. Only one participant had taken up their stated occupational alternative as cited in previous interviews. This individual had originally identified ‚chef' as his

occupational choice, but subsequently joined the armed forces as a cook. Seven individuals who identified occupational alternatives could not be accounted for as they did not complete the interview series.

Of those who had taken up work outside of the hospitality industry and were in work (as opposed to those still at college, in further training/university or not working), all (n=10) were working in occupations at or below the range of ANU4 ratings for identified hospitality occupations (see Table 9). The following table shows the occupational status ratings for those in work outside hospitality and for those in training (ANU4 ratings apply to the qualified equivalent of the occupation upon finalising training).

Table 9. Actual participant occupational alternatives and status rating – post secondary schooling

Occupation	n =	ANU4 Rating
Fast food sales	3	22.7
Dental assistant/nurse	1	31.9
Retail sales	2	27.4
Apprentice plumber	1	40.4
Childcare worker	1	35.4
Food processing plant worker	1	12.4
Security worker	1	27.6
In training	**n =**	**ANU4 Rating**
Accounting (university)	1	73
Teacher (university)	1	84.5
Business administration (TAFE)	1	34.9

Evidence from this research indicates that whilst an occupational alternative may be identified by hospitality VET students, it is highly likely to fall within a similar occupational status category as their original hospitality aspirations. This indicates that the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' is narrowed by perceptions of occupational status and solidified by

educational aspirations that provide skills and knowledge suitable for trade level/operational occupations (i.e. lower level ANU4 rated occupations).

4.1.13 Self-rating of social class

The perception of one's class plays a critical role in the process of choosing an occupation (Noonan et al., 2007; Brown et al., 1996). Identifying where participants perceived themselves in regard to class relative to others in the community gives another perspective from which to view the influence of social background.

To determine perception of class, and subsequent match to occupational status, participants were asked to self-rate their perceived social class position at the final interview. Individuals had difficulty in identifying what social class was. Subsequently, most participants were not clear on how they perceived themselves in relation to social class stratification by occupation. Of all 42 comments on the perception of their own social class, only four participants suggested that they were lower class/working class and one suggested that they were perceived from the higher or upper class. Mostly, individuals self-identified as middle class (30 comments). This is consistent with research that suggests that most Australians consider themselves to be middle class (Graetz & McAlister, 1994). Seven participants did not know their social class or could not answer.

Of 32 comments regarding which class occupations would fit into, participants suggested that their chosen hospitality occupation was a middle class occupation, two suggested it was above their perception of their own social class and one suggested it was below. Where participants had changed occupational choice (n=19), six of the eight specific comments indicated that their new occupational choice/aspiration was consistent with a higher social

class than their current perceived class status (occupations identified were accountant, architect, nurse, teacher, childcare worker and business administration) and thus may provide evidence of social mobility. This indicates that hospitality VET students are more likely to remain in occupations that they perceive to be of a similar status to perceptions of their class.

4.2 *Overview of data pertaining to social class*

Considering this data, it is evident that social class (as defined by socioeconomic background and occupational status) affects occupational choice in hospitality VET students by narrowing the „zone of acceptable alternatives' to occupations within a similar occupational status to that which they perceive to be of similar to their class. However, parental occupation is perceived (often erroneously) to be rated lower in occupational status than a hospitality occupation, and an occupation in hospitality may therefore be seen to provide upward occupational status mobility, thus putting participants in a perceived higher class than their parents. However, parental influence is not a salient decision-making factor for hospitality VET students.

The status perceptions of occupations in hospitality are more likely to be overestimated in comparison to ANU4 occupational ratings by hospitality VET students. So too, their status perceptions of hospitality occupations are influenced by the perceived prestige of the workplace as well as the occupation. Participants who decided against an occupation in hospitality were more likely to moderate their perceptions of occupational status down, whilst those remaining in the industry revised their rating of their chosen occupation upward. Hospitality VET students are not likely to pursue higher education in order to access training for professional occupations in hospitality (e.g. management). This may limit options to achieve occupations of a higher occupational status rating, perhaps curtailing class mobility.

Findings regarding the final element in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise – interest – follow.

4.3 *Interest and hospitality as an occupational choice*

4.3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the research findings in regard to the role of „interest' in the occupational decision making of hospitality VET students. The following findings support responses to the second research sub-question:

RQ 2: What role does „interest' play as an antecedent to occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

The concept of „interest' as used in the context of occupational decision making is defined and the data regarding participant interest factors are identified. The data illustrate three main themes of when and why a hospitality occupation was chosen and on what information that decision was based. These themes provide a response to the second research question.

4.3.2 „Interest' – a definition

„Interest' is identified in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise as the final process of narrowing of occupational options and further refines the „zone of acceptable alternatives'. Interests are central to occupational aspirations and, as Gottfredson (1981) suggests, individuals have organised and narrowed their occupational choices by their interests by late adolescence.

4.3.3 When did the development of occupational interest in hospitality occur?

During the first interview participants were asked how long they had held an interest in a hospitality career. Of the 49 responses, 20 participants had indicated that their decision had been made in the previous 12 months, 12 had made a decision "between 13 and 24 months"

prior to the interview, and 17 suggested that their decision had been made over two years prior.

For those participants with a long standing interest (i.e. over two years) (n=17), 12 had developed an interest in cooking from home or school and had subsequently identified cooking as a career option. For example:

> For years I've wanted to be a chef, for as long as I can remember I wanted to be a chef.
> *Have you ever wanted to do anything else?*
> No. (RC3 1st *Interview*)

Of the five remaining participants with long term interests, four suggested that there was a family connection to the hospitality industry in some way. For the 12 participants indicating that their occupational choice occurred between 13 and 24 months prior, the most common catalyst for four was the need to choose subjects for their college school years (Years 11 & 12) and previous school work experience or subjects (n=8).

This was similar for the participants making a more recent occupational choice. Of 20 participants, ten suggested that previous school work or work experience had initiated or cemented their interest and, for five, the need to choose courses for college was a salient impetus. The following statements illustrate these data:

> Last year in high school because we're in grade 10 and all everyone came in you know with big speeches and everything about career choices... (LC5 1st Interview)

> I don't know, it seemed really interesting to do. I wanted to do teaching but then I ended up doing a two week work placement there and I thought "no". And then I ended up doing a two week placement at XYZ Hotel and I really enjoyed doing that. (HC5 1st Interview)

These data indicate that hospitality VET students are more likely to decide upon a hospitality occupation within the previous two years of schooling. In terms of support or catalysts for occupational choices, school-based factors such as the imminent need to choose relevant subjects and undertaking work experience programs and catering courses in high school years are influential in turning a general interest (e.g. interest in cooking) into a career option (e.g. chef).

4.3.4 Why a hospitality occupation? Interests as a decision-making factor

As part of the first interview, questions regarding the reasons for choosing a hospitality occupation were asked. An indication of participants' interest as precursors to occupational decision making was sought. Participants were asked to indicate what it was that prompted them to make that choice; essentially, what interest factor lead to their decision to choose an occupation in hospitality. Table 10 indicates the primary reasons given and the frequency of responses from 61 participants to the question of what interested them about their occupational aspiration/choice. Whilst some individuals identified more than one interest factor, the most prominent are reported in Table 10.

Table 10. Participant occupational interest motivator

Interest Motivator	Responses	Interest Motivator	Responses
Love/like/enjoy cooking	26	Fun, excitement, enjoyment	18
Run own hospitality business	17	People (working with, talking with, interacting with)	10
Parental suggestion	9	Travel	8
Vocational task orientation *	10	Being in charge of hospitality business	7
Current work in hospitality (known entity)	5	Easier than other options	4
Not good at anything else	2	Undecided/don't know	2
Growing industry (opportunity)	1	Didn't like anything else	1

(* The physical aspects of what is involved in the job such as waiting tables or serving drinks.)

These motivators can be grouped into task-orientated interests (the „doing' of hospitality-specific work), parental influence (e.g. parental suggestion), emotional/relational factors (e.g. having fun or dealing with people) and pragmatic factors (e.g. opportunities to travel, attrition/absence of other options) (see Table 11).

Table 11. Classes of interest motivator

Interest Motivator	n= Responses
Vocational task orientation	65
Emotional/relational	28
Pragmatic rationale	18
Parental suggestion	9
Total responses (from 61 participants)	120

It should be noted that of the „pragmatic rationale' options, three participants suggested that hospitality was an option that emerged due to a lack of other more motivating options. Therefore, for these participants, their „zone of acceptable alternatives' had narrowed to only one option. Of all 120 responses regarding the interest(s) underpinning their stated occupational choice, vocational task-oriented interest was most prevalent; that is, the physical tasks of the job role (e.g. cooking). However, as discussed further in the next section, participants' comments indicated that, in the main, they had undertaken little research into the job. How they came to develop a stated interest motivator was also vague. The following comments illustrate this point:

> I just think I'd like to cook and be a chef I just always love working in a kitchen.
> *So how did you know that you always liked working in a kitchen?*
> I don't know. (D1 1st Interview)

> ...I've thought well I like food and I sort of just came onto it, I don't know how. (D5 1st Interview)

> I always like cooking
> *What information did you use to determine that cooking and being a chef was where you wanted to be? Did you use any career advice or did you talk to anybody about it?*
> Not really. (CC1 1st Interview)

> ...I like cooking and I want to do the management side of a hotel...I just like hotels, I don't know why. (CC4 1st Interview)

The narrative data suggests that participants had made an occupational choice based on a limited understanding of the reality or demands of the particular job role.

4.3.5 What are the bases for a hospitality occupational choice? Participant research into hospitality occupations

When they were asked about their knowledge of hospitality occupations, participants gave rudimentary commentary on the hours (e.g. split shifts, long hours), the pay levels as reported by those in the sector, and a very basic description of the tasks. This basic understanding of conditions and work in hospitality were developed through the pre-choice research that had been undertaken. The most prevalent source of information used to research the occupation prior to making an occupational choice was family and friends (21 responses). The following comments indicate that whilst the ANU4 rates hospitality occupations (at best) in the lower half of the occupational status scale, opinions derived from people in participants' own social space (e.g. family and friends) indicated a more positive rating of the occupation:

> They'd love it, they've been trying to talk me into it.
> *Why is that?*
> Good pay, travel, they've always wanted to travel and they were trying to talk me into travelling, they just want me to do something good because both my brothers are in the forces so they want me to do something good as well.
> *And they think hospitality is a good option?*
> Yeah, it's not just cooking, it's everything. (G2 1st *Interview*)

> Well the people I talk to, they rate it pretty high, like the long hours – they have to really like do the courses to know how fun it can be. (SM3 1st Interview)

The data indicate that the most prevalent source of information was family and friends (n=21), demonstrating that the people within each participant's social space have influences on occupational decision making. This also indicates (as identified in the findings regarding social class) that participants identified occupations that were congruent with perceptions of their own social class. If individuals only take into consideration the reported experiences of those in their immediate social space, alternative „voices' regarding occupational alternatives are not heard or heeded, leading to a narrow range of occupational alternatives from which to choose.

The second most prevalent source of information was experience in a previous school course (n=12). This helps to explain the high proportion of occupational choices leaning toward „chef', as the high school catering course was most cited as having been a precursor to occupational choice. Such courses are often based in a domestic cooking context and therefore may not provide a realistic job preview of a commercial hospitality setting. The information and experiences that participants may use to inform their occupational choices are different to what can realistically be expected in a hospitality workplace. Therefore, there may be a disparity between occupational expectation and actual experience once the individual starts work in their chosen occupation.

Despite the prevalence of the „celebrity chef' phenomenon over the last decade or so (Chan, 2003; Hyman, 2008) the media (e.g. cooking shows or brochures) did not rate highly (n=5) as a source of information or a decision-making factor. However, information from careers expositions and career advisers was cited by six and seven participants respectively. These opportunities were provided by the participants' schools and were designed to assist with choosing subjects for college enrolment, not necessarily as a long term career choice. Actual experience of the workplace in a work experience program was identified by five participants

and three others reported having worked in a hospitality environment. This suggests that a minority (n = 8) had firsthand knowledge of a hospitality working environment in part-time jobs. Six participants indicated that they had undertaken no research at all into their chosen occupation before entering into hospitality vocational education. The sources of information used to investigate career choices appear in Table 12.

Table 12. Sources of occupational/career information

Source of Information	n = Responses	Source of Information	n = Responses
Family/friends	21	High school course (e.g. catering)	12
Teachers/career advisor	7	Visiting/working in hospitality venues (3 each)	6
Information day/careers expo	6	None	6
Other (e.g. brochures/media)	5	Work placement	5
Internet	2	Don't know	0

Overall, as identified by the data, little objective and robust research was completed by participants prior to choosing a hospitality occupation and entering into hospitality training. This provides some indication as to why the understanding of working conditions and occupational demands was poor. This is discussed further in the next section.

4.3.6 Demands of work in hospitality occupations as a foundation for occupational interest

During the first interview, participants were asked about the conditions in which they'd be working once they achieved their occupational aspiration. Participants indicated a rudimentary understanding of what their potential occupation held in store for them. Despite the high incidence of „overrating' their occupational choice against the objective external ANU4 status scale, participants had the perception that some elements of the hospitality occupation/workplace were not ideal. For example, when responding to the question of expected working conditions, responses suggested that the main areas of knowledge resided

in the „long hours' and „split shifts' (n=41), busy/stressful/tiring work (n=13), and low pay (n=12). This indicates that a standard mythology and rhetoric regarding a hospitality occupation was being perpetuated.

Overall, of the most salient descriptors of expectations of hospitality working conditions, only three were positive (good pay [n=18], good hours [n=1] and good working conditions [n=1]). Only three responses indicated an expectation regarding emotional labour (in regard to working with people) as a demanding or challenging element of working in the hospitality environment. This appears in contrast to the ten responses given as "working with people" as a motivator for why a hospitality occupation was chosen. The following responses indicate expectations of the hospitality workplace/job:

> Well hospitality people don't often get the best pay, and the hours are crap but if you really like it then you do this kind of work I guess. (HC3 1st Interview)
>
> I know the hours are going to be like – I did industry placement 2 weeks ago, and they were split shifts, and they were 10–2 and 5.30–9 and they're going to be long hours and probably all day for lunch and breakfast and tea, that sort of thing, probably early and very late but I reckon it'll be all right. (D2 1st Interview)
>
> Low wages, heavy hours, all the annoying tedious jobs, other than that it'll be all right. (D1 1st Interview)
>
> Long (hours) in hospitality, practically become nocturnal I guess... Long, 12–14 hour days. (SM2 1st Interview)

Over the course of the following two interviews, a similar investigation was made of participants' realisations of the conditions of work in a hospitality occupation as exposure to the workplace grew through the hospitality course. Whilst the mythology around hospitality work demands a belief that long hours and stressful work are inevitable characteristics of work in this sector, what „long' and „stressful' actually meant to participants was found to be variable and nebulous.

> Hours, it can be longer than I thought. I didn't realise how hard it was to stand up for 3 hours…carrying plates and stuff. It was a bit harder than I thought it would be, longer hours. (HS1 2nd Interview)

In regard to an understanding of remuneration, 18 responses across all interviews indicated that they thought the money was good. Again, this indicates that one's perception of this element of occupational interest depends on where one is situated in a socioeconomic sense.

> *You say you're pretty happy with the money?*
> Yeah, yeah. Especially considering how it goes up every year...I still am on the same wage but I am like on eight dollars an hour and I was actually surprised it was as high as it was... (RC5 3rd Interview)

There is also a general acceptance that apprenticeship wages are low and this seems to be an established fact based on broad information gained through basic information searches with other parties (e.g. parents). However, understanding or expectations of work in a hospitality occupation was rudimentary, particularly in the first interview. Whilst knowledge of the hospitality workplace grew over time, perceptions of hospitality working conditions (particularly in regard to pay) were dependent on the participant's point of reference. Information searches were not robust and were reliant on subjective sources. Decision-making catalysts, in some cases, were based on a short term pragmatic rationale (e.g. had no other choice, needed to make a subject choice for college) rather than an occupationally oriented one (e.g. I really want to be a chef). This has implications in regard to decision making as hospitality VET students may be making decisions based on subjective, imperfect or incomplete rationalisations, and therefore may find a disparity between expectations and actuality when entrance to the workplace is made.

The career decision-making literature identified interest as a precursor to occupational decision making and, in this case, also the catalyst to undertaking vocational education and training in hospitality. To summarise, interest impacts career decision making in hospitality

VET students through an expected enjoyment of task-based work, despite the fact that little formal or objective research is undertaken to determine the actuality of the demands of the occupational choices espoused by participants. So too, interest in an occupational option was generated from non-specific precursors that are forced into the zone of socially acceptable alternatives. This was particularly so in response to the need to make subject choices for college and was often supported by past school experiences, often with no actual correlation to a commercial hospitality setting.

The next chapter identifies the role of the elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory (self-efficacy, goal orientation and outcome expectation) on occupational decision making in hospitality VET students and aims to present evidence to support a response to the third sub-question:

RQ3: How do „self-efficacy', 'goal orientation' and „outcome expectation' interact to achieve occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

4.4 *Social Cognitive Career Theory and occupational decision making in hospitality students*

4.4.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the role of the elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory (self-efficacy, goal orientation and outcome expectation) on occupational decision making in hospitality VET students. It presents evidence to support a response to the third sub-question: *How do self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation interact to achieve occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?* Self-efficacy, goal orientation and outcome expectation are discussed individually before introducing other impacts on occupational decision making in hospitality VET students.

4.4.2 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is suggested to be one of the prime underpinning motivators for occupational choice. It allows individuals to build a perception of their own capacities and abilities which are then applied to an occupational context (Lent & Brown, 1996). Self-efficacy underpins the individual's choice to move into certain occupations as it has a strong relationship to both class and interests in regard to occupational choice making (Gottfredson, 1981). During the second interview, participants were asked to rate on a scale of one to ten how confident they felt in achieving their espoused occupational goal („one' being not confident at all and „ten' being convinced that the career outcome will come to fruition). The term „confidence' was used as a proxy for self-efficacy in this case given the expectation that participants would better understand the term „confidence' as opposed to „self-efficacy'.

Of those who reported their „confidence' (n= 34) in regard to the achievement of their stated occupational choice in hospitality, 27 participants suggested a rating of seven and above

(which was considered to be confident in achieving the occupational outcome) and of those who suggested less than 7 (n=7), their rationale was due to not having the practical skills yet to undertake the role effectively (n=2), they lacked faith in their own ability (n=1), they were concerned about being able to pay for tuition (n=1), cited personal issues (n=1) or they were considering another occupational choice and were undecided (n=2). Indicative quotes regarding the development of confidence were:

> But I think if I want to go into this industry, I'd like to have more training because I feel I'm not ready to go into it just yet. (CC3 – 2nd Interview)
>
> Just like going to a training school or whatever and get more like, level up, just build myself up. (SM1 2nd Interview)
>
> Probably 8. Everything else is fine, just speed. When you're working, speed. But everybody said that will come in time. (D5 2nd Interview)
>
> He's *(the VET teacher)* encouraging everyone to go to Drysdale… apprenticeship stuff or something. But I think if I want to go into this industry, I'd like to have more training because I feel I'm not ready to go into it just yet. (CC3 2nd Interview)

Responses (n=22) indicated that learning and skill development was a reason for enjoyment of the hospitality workplace and an underpinning factor to the development of self-efficacy. Comments on this topic were made across all interviews, for example:

> It has got a lot better because the good thing at the moment it is just me and the head chef so he is just like showing me one on one and yeah, it is just really good, I am sort of getting more knowledge as I am going and it is making me want to work a lot more and sort of thrive in the industry so... (RC6 3rd Interview)
>
> Customer interaction and learning the new skills basically every time I go there I learn something new so, it's just good interacting with people and it just gives you more confidence as well. (HS2 1st Interview)
>
> Well because we all have good communication skills and we all back each other up and there's no like, you don't get in trouble if you miss something, it's just sort of like, oh don't forget this next time. So you don't actually get growled at as such, which helps a lot in the fact that I'm still learning. (HL6 2nd Interview)
>
> Yep, just really helpful, you know, because I am learning everything, they're just really easy going, basically give you the time of day to teach you something new. (G4 2nd Interview)

> ...if you don't like where you are you are not going to enjoy it, you are not going to learn and all that sort of stuff so yeah. (RC4 3rd Interview)

> I then found XYZ and the environment is a lot more calm and the staff are a lot more friendlier and if you need help, they can help you and they will teach you if you need to taught something, you know, they are not going to have a go at you or any of that stuff if you don't know something so yeah... Yeah, it helps me a lot and it also builds up my confidence. (RC8 3rd Interview)

Where participants found that learning was impeded by workplace barriers or colleagues (e.g. poor communication, lack of support) the sense of self-efficacy was diminished and therefore the entire work placement experience or the establishment itself was seen in a poor light too. For example:

> Well, they were just rude; they were not supportive of you, like they expected you to know everything when you didn't – like they expected you to know how to run their place and you haven't been there for that long... It was like – it was like make you feel like you are not good enough to work in hospitality, like yeah. (SM1 3rd Interview)

> They were really rude. Oh there was one of them I talked to, she was all right but the rest were all rude... If I asked them what else I could do they would just look at me and continue with their work. That happened a few times there. (HC8 2nd Interview)

> Yeah he was just like I didn't know anything and he was like "oh do you know how to whip cream?" And you're like, "yes, I know how to whip cream!"
> *How did that make you feel?*
> Like I was stupid. (D1 2nd Interview)

> Because I didn't really cook at all, all I did was wash up for five, six hours a day. And I didn't get a chance to cook and then I got told off for what I did all the time so I just got frustrated with it. (HC8 3rd Interview)

Self-efficacy, in this context, is illustrated by the following comments regarding levels of acceptance in the workplace, relationships with others in the workplace, and a sense of being afforded an opportunity to learn vocational skills. Comments (n= 16) regarding work placement experiences suggested that participants felt that they could have contributed more during the work placement part of their course. For example:

> I think the second one would have been better if I'd gotten to do more things. Basically I just stood there and I chopped a few carrots for (hours)… and that was really interesting! I did work with a cook once, and cooked up some spinach but that was about it. I think it would have been better if they got me more into what they were doing. (CC3 2nd Interview)
>
> Um. Like what I expected when I went to work placement? I don't know, I thought I was going to get more jobs to do, I didn't think I would just be sitting there so bored, given little things to do and stuff. (SM 1 2nd Interview)

Self-efficacy was identified as the level of confidence the participant espoused in being able to achieve their occupational goals. It was found to be high (n=27 with a self-reported confidence rating over seven), even for people with little knowledge of the hospitality workplace or experience in their occupational choice. Where skills deficiencies were identified (n=8), they were not seen to provide sufficient impediments to prevent entry into a stated occupation. This is consistent with the concept that self-efficacy is an internal construct that may not be related to objective measures of competency. For example, an individual's belief in their capacity to pursue an occupation as a chef may be more robust and persuasive than external measures of competence. As identified previously, participants did not undertake rigorous information searches regarding their occupational choice, and therefore a capacity to objectively assess competency in an occupation is limited.

Whilst self-efficacy was found to be generally high it could not be tested until individuals had gained experience of the hospitality workplace. As identified above, experiences may have had a detrimental effect on self-efficacy where self-perceptions of competence were disconfirmed by the reality of work through vocational work experience. The development of skills and competencies by gaining experience and undertaking further training were perceived to be a requisite element of developing into their chosen occupational role over time.

4.4.3 Goal orientation

Occupational goals can drive career intention from an early age through to adolescence and into early career (Gottfredson, 1981). The extent to which individuals are goal-oriented toward their occupational choice influences choice behaviours, such as a decision to maintain work in that occupation or seek out other occupational options.

At each interview session, participants were asked to nominate their contingency plan if their hospitality occupation was found to be unsuitable. To derive an indication of how many other options were considered to be available to participants as a contingency, and to indicate the strength of outcome expectation, they were asked what they would do if they decided that their chosen hospitality occupation wasn't found to be satisfactory. It was established that few had other firm options in mind. Table 13 identifies the number of participants with or without contingency plans at each interview.

Table 13. Other reported possible occupational options

Interview	Contingency Plan Out Of Hospitality (n)	Contingency Plan In Hospitality (n)	No Contingency Plan/Not Sure (n)	Total Responses (n)
1	14	7	26	47
2	10	10	14	34
3	4	6	19	29

At the first interview, three participants suggested that they had made a firm alternate occupational choice. All others were non-committal, even surprised to have been faced with the question of what they would do if their first occupational choice was not suitable. For example:

> I'd just be making a rubbish name for myself. I don't know, I'd be lost I think. I'd just panic. (RC5 1st Interview)

> I'm screwed! I don't know, I think I'd think about it first and if you can't stick at it you just have to go through it because like my Pop he will be just like "you're not quitting, you'll do it," and that's just who he is. I'd probably have a lot of pressure to stick at it so I would stick at it, even if I hated it. (D8 1st Interview)
>
> I actually don't know because I don't know what else I want to be. (D1 1st Interview)
>
> I think I could do something else if I really wanted to but I don't know I just enjoy it so much I haven't thought about it. (RC4 1st Interview)

In general, there was little commitment to a definitive occupational option. Where identified possible alternatives included occupations at a similar status rating to hospitality (e.g. hairdressing, child care, massage, flight attendant), the option of undertaking other/further training, even if the discipline or occupation was unknown, was seen to be a possible contingency (n=7). The following examples illustrate these points:

> Probably go back to school, train up for something different. Most people these days have 4 or 5 careers in a lifetime, so that's why, if I give it a really good shot at it and I figure out it's not for me then I'll be happy because if I don't do it I would have been forever curious, it would have been a better life whatever life I live, and if I don't make it then I'll probably be one step closer to knowing what really would make me happy. (SM2 1st Interview)
>
> Yeah I have thought about that. I really don't know what I'd do though. I wouldn't know if I had to do more study, different sort of study and then apply for another I don't know. (G3 1st Interview)
>
> Maybe go to a different I don't know like tour guiding from TAFE and get into the tourism side of it. (RC7 1st Interview)
>
> I'd probably just go to TAFE and do some courses. (D6 1st Interview)

4.4.4 Further training and goal achievement

When asked what further training needed to be completed to enable the participant to move from the current state (student) to being employed in the occupations for which they were undertaking vocational education, it was generally accepted that further training was required (n=122 responses). However, comments indicated that little was known about what it was, what it might entail or what the course might be called (n=45 responses). For example:

> *What sort of training do you think you're going to need to do?*
> At TAFE kind of stuff.
> *Do you know what sort of courses you need to do and how long it's going to take?*
> No, not really. (RC7 1st Interview)

> Maybe go to TAFE and I'm not sure what you can do but I'm guessing TAFE would be a good place to have a look if I couldn't get an apprenticeship of course. (D8 1st Interview)

> I think I might need to do some more training to get more knowledge in the front of house and bar area, just to be really good at it.
> *And do you know what sort of training is available to you to get that knowledge?*
> No not really. (D7 1st Interview)

> I reckon I'd need like 15 years experience or something and definitely business management or something at TAFE or some sort of training. (HC2 1st Interview)

> Probably attend Drysdale*. (*hospitality/tourism specific training institution)
> *Do you know what you need to do there?*
> No, not really. I don't really know much about Drysdale. (CC2 1st Interview)

As part of the data regarding further training, there was a perception that collecting vocational qualifications was a path to success and that there was a natural progression from one vocational qualification to another. For example:

> I'm not really sure, I've planned to do Certificates, like one in hospitality this year and I'm doing another VET course as well, work place skills, and next year do Certificate 2 in Hospitality and Certificate 2 in Business then probably just head over and see what's available. (G1 1st Interview)

> I'll probably just study to get my Certificate 2 and 3 in Hospitality, in Kitchen Operations and then after a couple of years of that I don't know what I'd do, probably try and get into a full time job, but I don't know how long that will take. (G3 2nd Interview)

There is also evidence that those who may be considering a university path of training (n= 7) had little firm understanding of how to progress once out of college. For example:

> Next year, I'm doing a few pre-tertiaries because I'm not sure whether or not I'm going to go to university or have a year off, so I'm going to do accounting next year. I'm doing health next year which is pre-tertiary as well. Housing design, which is in

> case I change my mind later on and want to do interior designing. I'm also doing AOP which is Australian specific sort of thing. (D5 2nd Interview)

> At the moment I want to do financial management or I don't know what the courses are called but financial management at like TAFE, then do the Advanced Diploma eventually, I don't know how many years that takes, but do what I have to do to get the Advanced Diploma, then maybe try and go to uni. It would be good to be a CPA, that would be a good thing to do.
> *Why do you think being a CPA is a good thing?*
> Because it's the hardest thing you can be. (HS5 1st Interview)

The narrative data also suggest an element of concern regarding „keeping one's options open', but the relevant options are not clearly stated. This point is identified by the following comments:

> I'm not sure if I'm going to Drysdale or not because I still want to keep my options open. It scares me to hone in on one thing and be like yes, that's what I'm going to do, because it makes me feel like I can't change my mind, even though I can. But yes so probably Drysdale, do some courses there and stuff. (SM2 2nd Interview)

> That's why I wanted to keep doing my pre-tertiaries and come back next year, even though it's going to affect it, that way I'm still keeping my options open, so if I don't like it I've still got education and stuff like that, so I can go on and do other things. I wanted to keep both my options so I've got something to fall back on. (CC2 1st Interview)

> But I am also thinking at the moment – well, I have kept the option open, I would like to do a flight attendant *(course)* as well so I guess that is kind of hospitality wise but I think that would be different hospitality but I would enjoy doing that I think so I have kept that opening if I don't go to uni, I would like to do that. (SM2 3rd Interview)

The above examples highlight that whilst a decision has been made to enter a hospitality occupation, goals in regard to occupations for the long term are not clearly articulated. This indicates that a firm goal orientation may not be clearly identified even when considered over time (i.e. over the course of the research interviews) and despite undertaking vocational training.

4.4.5 Outcome expectation

Outcome expectations are important to occupational choice. Individuals will behave in certain ways and make certain decisions based on their expectations of what might happen given a certain set of circumstances (Deigelman & Subich, 2001; Gianakos, 1995). In the case of occupational decision making, response behaviour and choice will be moderated or affected by an individual's perception of whether their occupational choice meets, exceeds or fails to meet their expectations. Behaviours might include remaining in a job or moving to the same job in another workplace. Alternatively, they may choose a different occupation altogether. The data across all interviews indicate that contingency plans were not considered by the majority of participants (see Table 13). This suggests that the identified occupational choice is pursued with a focused intention of achieving that occupation, or that no other option has proved sufficient to sway interest away from a hospitality occupation, or that no other option was perceived to exist.

As identified in Table 14, those participants who actually remained with their original occupational aspiration were in the minority (n=21 of the original 61 participants) and 18 participants were working in the hospitality sector at the end of the research program. Participants who changed their mind completely about their occupational aspiration account for nearly half of the original sample population (n=28), and six had modified their occupational choice (e.g. took up employment in institutional catering). Due to mortality, 12 of the original participants' occupational outcomes were indeterminate.

Table 14. Participant occupational outcomes

Occupational Outcome	n =	Decision making (at last point of contact)	n =
Undecided but not hospitality	22	Changed choice	28
Working in hospitality	18	Unchanged	21
Missing	12	Unknown	6
Still in college/training	6	Modified	6
Institutional catering	3		

In terms of outcome expectation, the data suggests that, like goal orientation, there seems to be a poorly articulated idea about the way in which a career might unfold (e.g. get work as a chef) from a current point in time. That is, participants reported an understanding of their current position (e.g. college student undertaking a VET course to gain skills or early entrant to the hospitality workplace) and could espouse an occupational aspiration (e.g. chef), but the path in between was not clearly articulated and expectations were unclear or unknown.

This was particularly so in the case of participants who changed their occupational choice between the first interview and the third (n=28). These comments from the third and final interview illustrate that their expectations were unclear.

> *Do you think that you will stay at 'Fast Food Outlet' for a while?*
> Yeah, probably about a year or two.
> *Okay, and what do you think you will do after that?*
> Police officer, probably. (HC8 3rd Interview)

> At the moment, I will just be staying there because I am thinking about going to either TAFE or uni.
> *Okay, to do what?*
> Not entirely sure but I have been thinking of a teacher's course.
> *So, hospitality is not something you want to do long term?*
> No, I --- I like it still but probably not as a permanent job. (G2 3rd Interview)

> Well, I actually want to be a teacher now.
> *So, what made you change your mind?*
> I don't really know; I just think that I sort of have a better idea of what teaching involves and I don't know I just feel like I kind of know what the job is going to be like rather than going into Tourism or Hospitality because that is sort of always going to be changing. I just feel that that is a more stable sort of thing for me to do.
> *Do you have any idea of what sort of teaching you are going to do?*
> Um, I am looking at doing primary teaching but yeah, I am not really sure, I am just going to sort of see how I go. (HL3 3rd Interview)

The ten participants working in hospitality jobs in apprenticeships (which entails a quasi-binding training contract with an employer) had more of an outcome expectation which was largely defined by their apprenticeship tenure and completing a qualification. For example:

> *... what is your confidence rating in becoming a chef and owning your own restaurant once you have been out and travelled if one is no confidence at all and ten is absolutely going to happen?*
> Probably a seven.
> *Seven? What would make it a ten?*
> I couldn't tell you. Probably finishing my apprenticeship would help – yeah that would definitely help. ((D1 3rd Interview)

> *Have your career goals changed at all?*
> No, not really maybe I am opening up new ones as I go but – no, it is still kind of the same basic goal that I am going for to qualify *(as a chef)* to start with, I guess, and see what happens from there. (RC 7 Interview 3)

> *Do you think that you will continue to work in the hospitality industry after your apprenticeship?*
> Yeah, my apprenticeship – they have just brought it in, the apprenticeship is only for two years now so I am thinking about after finishing this apprenticeship going and getting a commercial cooking apprenticeship.
> *Okay*.
> Complete my training so that I am qualified in both areas. (CC2 3rd Interview)

For those who were not undertaking a traditional apprenticeship form of training (n=2), but a „traineeship', there was still an expectation that their occupational outcome rested on completing qualifications. This participant talked of undertaking a „front of house' Certificate III level traineeship at a fast food cafe outlet:

So what is it that you'd prefer to be doing?
Probably working towards my chef *(qualification)* a bit more.
So you much prefer to be doing kitchen work than the front of house stuff?
Yeah.
Have your career goals changed at all since you did the VET program?
Well, I have decided to instead of going straight into being a chef, I actually want to do a management side as well I think. Like, I want to get a Certificate in Management hospitality as well a bit down the track a bit more. (HC1 3rd Interview)

This participant's response indicates that she wants to work more on becoming a chef (which was not her original occupational option) then she talks of doing training in management illustrating that both occupational goals and outcome expectation are not fixed despite the fact that she was in work and undertaking vocational training in hospitality at the time of interview. The quote illustrates that whilst the participant is dissatisfied with her occupation, neither a clearly articulated goal nor an expectation of future outcome is identified. She suggests no concrete plan to either change jobs or make her current work more satisfying. Again, the issue of collecting qualifications suggests that it is the Certificates that lead to occupational outcomes, not work experience. Given that she already had completed one qualification (gained through her VET course), she was undertaking a different one and was considering entering into another without any real picture of where she might settle or which occupation she will enter. The following quote from another participant illustrates a similarly unclear outcome expectation despite undertaking further/tertiary vocational training:

Yes, I don't have a job, but I am still studying at Drysdale.
Okay, what are you doing there?
I am doing my Certificate II in Kitchen Operations.
Okay, so the kitchen pathway is still what you are looking to do?
Yep, definitely.
You sound very definite about that.
Yes, I think so.
So, in regards to your career goals, what is it that you want to do at the end of your study now?
Well I want to finish a few courses that I am looking at doing and then I am hoping to get into a restaurant, either that being in a commercial kitchen or doing something like patisserie work even interests me but, yeah, I am hoping to be able to work in a commercial kitchen first and then see.

> *Have you applied for jobs as yet?*
> No, I haven't – I haven't bothered doing that yet, I am mainly just getting through my courses first and then see where I go. (G3 3rd Interview)

This individual illustrates that whilst she had a definite goal intention (e.g. becoming a chef), the outcome expectation was not concrete and fully dependent on „finish(ing) a few courses' to see where she ends up. The following participant, despite working at a casual job in hospitality whilst completing Year 12 (final college/school year), indicates that her original career ambitions had dissolved.

> *What is your career ambition at the moment?*
> I don't really have one anymore.
> *Okay ... you were doing waitressing...*
> Yeah I do want to stay in hospitality.
> *Yep, but not sure where?*
> Yeah. (D4 3rd Interview)

This non-specific outcome expectation was also illustrated in participants who had changed their mind about a hospitality occupation (n=28).

> Well, I am at TAFE at the moment and I am completing my Business Certificate.
> *Okay and have you decided to stay with your ideas of going into hospitality...?*
> No, I had forgotten about that...I guess everyone is different but, yeah, I didn't know like I was kind of confused when I finished school like "Oh God, what am I going to do next".
> *Okay.*
> Yeah, and then, yeah, I just thought I might just go to TAFE and just complete my Business Certificate.
> *...what is it about that type of work that you think that you might like?*
> I don't know because it is something that I am probably good at, like did a lot of work placements while completing the Certificate and that just made me like I don't know, I just like that stuff so – yeah. (SM1 3rd Interview)

> I'm at uni.
> *OK. So what are you doing at uni?*
> Accounting.
> *So once you come out with your accounting degree, what do you think that you'll do after that?*
> I'm not really sure yet, either get a job in as an accountant or work in hospitality. (HC4 3rd Interview)

These examples illustrate that outcome expectation can be unclear. This is despite participants having made a commitment to vocational or university education that deviates quite markedly from their original espoused hospitality occupational choice and for which they had already completed a course of vocational training. Such unclear expectations can lead to spontaneous occupational decisions as illustrated by this participant.

> *When we last spoke, you were looking at going into the hospitality industry, are you still at College?*
> No, I actually have gone onto a totally different direction and I am a dental nurse now.
> *Oh really – what's happened?*
> Um, I was working at Banjos and I don't know if – just saw an ad in the paper one day and ... for some reason I just saw it and thought, "hey that'd be good". And then the next week it was still in there and I thought "No, I'm going to go for this" and I wound up getting the job and now I have a traineeship.
> *As far as I remember there was nothing about being a dental nurse on your – it wasn't mentioned... (cont..)*
> No, none, I didn't even –
> *You hadn't even thought about it?*
> No, no, not at all. (HC2 3rd Interview)

Outcome expectations of hospitality VET students in regard to occupations are not robust nor clearly articulated, even when their vocational training is complete. Those with a form of „timetable', for example, an apprenticeship, had a more clearly stated expectation of outcomes than those without.

4.5 *Overview of Social Cognitive Career Theory and occupational decision making in hospitality VET students*

Having examined each of the elements of this sub-question separately, it is necessary to tie them together to reflect the interdependent notion that Lent et al., (1994) propose. The concept of triadic reciprocal determinism suggests that all three elements (self-efficacy, goal orientation and outcome expectation) interact with each other to allow an individual to arrive at an occupational/career choice. In regard to the occupational decision making of hospitality VET students, the elements of self-efficacy, goal orientation and outcome expectation were illustrated in the data. However, a lack of clarity was present, particularly for goal orientation and outcome expectation.

Self-efficacy was identified as the level of confidence the participant espoused in being able to achieve their occupational goals. Participants, overall, rated highly their confidence across all interviews, even though they may have had little experience of the workplace or their occupational choice. However, in regard to training and developing skills and abilities, the data indicates that the collection of certificated qualifications appears to have less to do with attaining a concrete outcome to achieve an occupational goal and more to do with a perceived „right of entry' to any occupation. Whilst readily identifiable with the concept of developing self-efficacy and to move into an occupation, training often appeared to be an end itself rather than a facilitating mechanism to achieve workplace skills for a particular occupation or to meet particular goals in line with an expected outcome.

Whilst goal orientation was present (i.e. participants could identify an occupational goal), there was little to justify that occupational choice other than an interest based on informal research and previous enjoyment of school-based activities. Whilst it could be argued that outcome expectation was evidenced by a lack of contingency planning and that all energy

was being funnelled into the participants' occupational choices, there was little evidence to support the notion that outcome expectations were concrete. That is, the rationale for having a singular focus on a particular occupation was often poorly articulated. Where a second (or other) occupational option was present, it was likely to be imprecise in terms of detail or planning; again, indicating that expected outcomes were poorly articulated. Whilst the elements of the Social Cognitive Career Theory model are evidenced, the lack of objective occupational research does not support goal development or outcome expectation. Also, self-efficacy is based on previous success and enjoyment of task-related, but not contextually-related, activities (e.g. catering course in high school). This suggests that confidence to meet „real world' workplace demands may not be objectively assessed and may be easily undermined once in the workplace.

4.6 *Other influences on occupational decision making*

Social class (as identified by socioeconomic background and occupational status), interest and the elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory have been investigated. The fourth research sub-question asks:

RQ4: What other elements impact on the occupational decision making process in hospitality VET students during early career experiences?

Findings to support a response to this question follow. In the context of this study, it appears that at the time when occupational choices were being made or consolidated for participants (i.e. at the beginning of the interview series), interest in vocational tasks is high (see Table 10), however, this shifts through the process of being exposed to actual work in their chosen occupational paths. This shift is represented by the focus of participants moving from task-

oriented interests to relational-related elements in the workplace, and the importance they place on relational elements in regard to enjoyment of their work.

The third and final interview illustrates that each participant who had remained in a hospitality occupation (n=18) identified relational/emotional connections with others (i.e. people they work with in the hospitality context) as one, if not the most salient, motivator to remain in that occupation.

When asked what was most enjoyable about their work in the hospitality context, 121 responses indicated „the people' as opposed to „the work' or vocational task motivators. As identified in the first interview, interest in the task-oriented vocational attributes that attracted participants to the occupation were not what maintained participants in their chosen job, nor were they what underpinned an intention to stay in the occupation (see Table 10). For example:

> I really like it, love it.
> *What is it about it that you really ... like?*
> I am doing what I really love and I love the people there, that's the main thing. (LC3 3rd Interview)

> *So if I was to ask you to put those into priorities what do you like most – about the job I mean – is it the people or the fact that you are cooking – what is it?*
> Probably the people, they are the most important. (RC5 3rd Interview)

> It is definitely the people as well. The people make it as well. I couldn't enjoy cook work there if I didn't get along with the other staff – it just makes it so much harder if you don't get on with the people. (D1 3rd Interview)

> The people mostly, I love the people I work with, they're great and also I like it here how there is not only a la carte food, there is function and breakfast and bar food so it is not just the one thing you are doing over and over again. (RC4 3rd Interview)

Conversely, 23 responses indicated that „people' elements of the work either actively discouraged them from remaining in their chosen occupation, their job at the time or the industry as a whole. The following responses illustrate this point:

> I would have to say, after working at XYZ for some time, there was a way that I was sort of treated by the head chef, my passion died a bit for cooking. *(This participant joined the RAAF as a cook)* (G4 3rd Interview)

> Because I did not like the people I was working with in hospitality. Well, they were just rude; they were not supportive of you, like they expected you to know everything when you didn't – like they expected you to know how to run their place and you haven't been there for that long... It was like – it was like, made you feel like you are not good enough to work in hospitality like, yeah. *(This participant left the industry to take up work in child care)* (SM1 3rd Interview)

> In front of customers and swore at them, you know, I had a couple (*of supervisors)* swear at me in front of customers which I thought was pretty unprofessional. I thought well, I might as well go and find another job – I can't really stay here and be screamed at... *(This participant left this establishment and found work in another soon after)* (RC8 3rd Interview)

All participants who reported having taken up an occupation in hospitality at the end of the research program (n=18) reported that the relationships with people were a fundamental underpinning reason for remaining in their chosen occupation.

In regard to the impact of relationships participants had developed with other people in the workplace, the data suggests that it is this element, rather than the actual work tasks, that encourages people to remain in the hospitality workplace. During the hospitality VET training course, participants' focus shifted from the interest in vocational task orientation (i.e. doing the work such as cooking) to the relationships between themselves and others in the workplace. For some, a poor experience in the workplace with people was enough to

disconfirm a hospitality occupational choice in terms of the particular establishment. For others they chose to abandon a choice to work in a hospitality occupation altogether.

4.6.1 Prestige of specific workplaces as a factor in occupational choice

Whilst occupations carry with them an indication of status or prestige, so do workplaces. That is, not only does the job role say something about the individual's social standing, so does the establishment in which that person works. Comments were made by participants regarding this topic across all interviews; however, the majority of comments made were in response to questioning in the initial interview. For example:

> Most people value them (people who work in hospitality) if it's good food, if it's just take-away they don't really because it's just there, if it's a good restaurant or something they will value what you've done, value hospitality and stuff. (RC4 1st Interview)
>
> It depends where you work. Just say if you worked in a 5 star resort or somewhere like that they'd probably put it up there, but if you worked in just say Macca's or a little café they would probably put it down there, oh not really that important. (D5 1st Interview)
>
> Yes and no, because people you're talking to "where do you work?" such and such, if you say "yeah I work in a little restaurant" they say, "oh yeah." If you say "a big restaurant" – just say XYZ or the CDE (*indicating fine dining restaurants)*, they're like, "Oh ok, interested". (HC7 1st Interview)
>
> I guess it depends on the place that you're working. If you worked at a place that had a good reputation and everything then it would be up here, but if it had a bad one then I'd stick it down the bottom. But I think it would generally be like a good job. (HC3 1st Interview)

The appeal of the workplace in regard to occupational status was a factor in occupational choice and is evidenced in 24 statements. This data lends weight to the assertion that perceived occupational status is a consciously applied decision-making factor and that this

perception also extends to the workplace. For example, being a chef may not in itself be prestigious, but being a chef in a certain establishment was.

4.7 *Summary*

This chapter has described the major findings of the research and identified proposed responses to the research questions initially posed. It was found that whilst much of this research was consistent with both Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Lent et al.'s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory, occupational decision making among hospitality VET students deviates from these two normative models, most particularly in regard to the importance of the role of workplace relationships and the role of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. The following chapter will discuss the findings in more detail and provide an interpretation of the data in regard to the research questions.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5 Discussion

5.1 *Introduction*

The objectives of this chapter are two-fold. Firstly, it provides a discussion of the thesis results by answering the specific research questions posed in the method chapter. Secondly, it presents a consolidated model of occupational decision making as it relates to the contemporary practice of delivering VET courses in the latter part of secondary school. Finally, the chapter closes with a report of the limitations of the research and opportunities for further research.

5.2 *Status of parental occupation and place of residence as a factor in occupational decision making of hospitality VET students*

This section deals with the first part of the first research sub-question:

RQ1a: How does the family of origin impact on occupational decision making by hospitality VET students?

It is well established in the literature that social class, particularly of that of an individual's family, is fundamental to the process of occupational decision making. An individual's perception of their own and their family's position within a community therefore influences occupational decision making. According to Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, individuals will begin to divest occupational options based on their perception of their social class in late childhood or early adolescence. This is based on a process by which people match the status of occupations with the perception of their own social class. This presupposes a rational world of choice where occupations that do not fit are divested and not revisited as an occupational option. Occupations that do fit form what is described as the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' (Gottfredson, 1981:548). An accurate

perception of an individual's own social class and that of possible occupations is fundamental to developing suitable occupational options.

5.2.1 Status of parental occupations as a factor of occupational decision making in hospitality VET students

Gottfredson (1981) suggests that there is a consensus about the perception and actuality of the status of occupations. If such a consensus existed, participants should have been able to identify the status of both their own occupational choice and the occupations of their parents. Also, it could have been expected that any deviations in occupational ratings from the ANU4 scale might have been consistent between ratings of their chosen hospitality occupation and their ratings of their parents' occupations. However, this research indicates that whilst participants consistently overrated their occupational choice against the ANU4 status scales (an external measure of the status of occupations), their ratings of their parents' occupations were not as consistent. In fact, the status ratings of participants' parents' occupations deviated more widely from the ANU4 scale than their ratings of their own occupational choice (see Table 15), but on average they underrated their parents' occupations.

Table 15 – Standard Deviation: Participants' Parental occupation ratings and own occupational choice ratings (first interview) against ANU4 ratings

	Difference Between ANU4 and Participants' Ratings Standard Deviation
Mothers' occupations	31.7
Fathers' occupations	23.6
Participants' occupational choice	19.9

These findings indicate that participants perceived the status of parental occupations differently to external benchmarks. This is the basis for an argument on social class and occupation, and one that deserves further large scale empirical investigation. The indication found in this research is that whilst Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and

Compromise is supported in the literature as providing (Blanchard & Lichtenberg, 2003; Helwig, 2004) support for the way in which individuals arrive at a suite of occupational options, assumptions of a rational process of occupational choice may inadequately encompass the complex reality of young people in transition from student to workforce participant in this context.

5.2.2 Parental influence and occupational status

Gottfredson (1981) suggests that by the time individuals come to be making their first occupational decision their socially learned identities have been formed. This includes the concept of their social class and expectations of the occupational roles that are considered to be available within that class, and therefore there is an expectation that children will identify occupations of similar occupational status as their parents. However, participants in this research identified occupations with an overall lower occupational status rating of their parents. This is now discussed further in the context of parental support for occupational choice of offspring.

The role of families in adolescent occupational decision making is generally taken to be that of providing advice, support and generating self-efficacy (Lindstrom et al., 2007; Spenner & Featherman, 1978; Turner & Lapan, 2002). Career decision-making theory also suggests that parental input into occupational decision making of their children will influence the decision itself (Durr & Tracey, 2009; Lindstrom et al., 2007; Palladino Schultheiss, 2006; Schoon, Martin & Ross, 2007) and contributes to the perpetuation of social class as defined, in part, through occupational status. That is, parental support of their children's occupational choices reinforces perceptions of social class and occupational prestige; therefore, parents from certain social classes will support their children's move into occupations consistent with that

class. In this study, however, no *overt* parental influence on decision making was reported by participants. *Tacit* parental approval of the occupational choices of offspring was present (even if jobs are perceived to be of a lower occupational status rating than parental occupations), but this did not provide participants with an impetus to pursue specific occupational alternatives – as evidenced by a general lack of reported occupational alternatives. Background influences such as social class and parental occupation had a greater influence on occupational decision making of hospitality VET students.

Participant comments indicate that *Tacit* parental influence has contributed to the reduction of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' prior to the time participants were forming/making occupational choices. Social class is not a salient issue for consideration in occupational choice but it is consistent with a self-rated perception of one's own social standing. This supports Gottfredson's (1981) argument that by the time people come to be making their first serious career choice they have already "established social identities that they now take for granted" (1981:565). This study has found that participants' occupational choice ratings were overall lower than their parents' occupations. This is contrary to the established idea that offspring will seek to maintain occupational status or will pursue some level of upward social mobility.

5.2.3 Socioeconomic background and area of family residence

This study has found that participants from areas with a higher social advantage score were more likely to have chosen a managerial level hospitality occupation than those from areas of lower socioeconomic advantage (see Table 5). Whilst this was not constant across all participants, this finding indicates a general consistency with Gottfredson's (1981) assertion that individuals divest occupational options if social barriers exist. That is, some occupations

are seen to be ‚out of reach' or are not considered due to lack of exposure to that occupation, and individuals are unable to fully comprehend the entirety of a possible occupational continuum; instead, they are able to recognise just their familiar section of such a continuum. Therefore, occupations that may be considered of lower occupational status in a broader continuum will be rated more highly on a limited continuum as the individual is only exposed to a certain range of occupations or believes that only a limited range of occupations is available to them.

5.2.4 Higher education denied: occupational decision making in hospitality VET students

In Tasmania, hospitality VET exists within the ‚vocational' education stream as opposed to a more ‚academic' educational pathway. Therefore, it is not unexpected that only15.2 per cent of participants indicated that university was an option. The appeal of a ‚hands on', workplace-based course of study characterised in VET courses provides ‚non-academics' with an alternative to subjects required for entry to university education. However, the literature suggests that people with only high school or lower levels of vocational education (e.g. AQF Certificate I or II) are more likely to come from (and often remain at) a lower socioeconomic background (ACER, 2010b; Bluestein et al., 2004), thus impeding capacity for social mobility. This research indicates that hospitality VET courses may not only provide an avenue for people without an aspiration to university education (Nguyen, 2010), but may predispose them to lower level occupations and narrows the opportunities to access higher level hospitality occupations such as management. The hospitality VET program therefore narrows the choices available to participants, channelling them into low occupational status jobs and, within this industry area, into lower status sections of the broad range of occupations available. Participant average status ratings for occupational choices or aspiration were lower than the average parental occupation status rating. This indicates that

participants are aspiring to lower levels of occupational status than their parents at the time of making their original occupational choice, and whilst participants believe that they are making an occupational choice allowing upward mobility they are, in fact, limiting their options for higher status occupations.

5.3 *Occupational status of hospitality work and occupational decision making in hospitality VET students*

The following discussion addresses the second part of the first research sub-question:

RQ1b: How does the status of hospitality work impact on occupational decision making by hospitality VET students?

Hospitality occupations exist in the lower 40 per cent of the ANU status scales, indicating lower occupational status. This is particularly the case for operational and entry level occupations such as chefs (ANU4 rating of 32.1) and waiters (ANU4 rating of 36.4). However, this research found that participants overrated their occupational choice at all three interviews; this is contrary to their ratings of parental occupations which were, on average, rated lower than the ANU4 scale.

The overrating of the status of a hospitality occupation works as a mechanism by which those in hospitality use to reconcile their occupation's negative image by reallocating it to a higher occupational status rating. Therefore, perception of their occupational choice is inflated to bring it up to the occupational status to which they aspire. To use Gottfredson's (1981) term, participants have conceptually "moved" their occupational choice and their perception of their own desired social standing into the same "social space" (Gottfredson, 1981:548). Brown et al., (1996) provide a partial explanation for this. They suggest that this is a generalised psychological mechanism that allows people to rationalise their occupational

aspiration by viewing the occupation as being better than it might be, and in this case, despite contrary views from people both inside and outside the hospitality sector. Distortion of participants' perceived occupational status is further problematised by the fact that they understood that other people might have a contradictory, and therefore negative, perception of hospitality occupations; as HL1 said, "most people would think it's pretty bad". However, participants were still intent on pursuing a hospitality occupation despite these negative qualities and were able to rationalise them; a position summarised by participant D1: "Low wages, heavy hours, all the annoying tedious jobs, other than that it'll be all right".

The individual's adjustment of occupational status perception is consistent with existing theory and creates a „social buffer' between people and those who consider their job as „low status'. This is common with occupations associated with low levels of ability and social taint, and is referred to in the sociology literature as "dirty work" (Kreiner et al., 2006). Working in occupations with a social taint can impact negatively on the self-efficacy of individuals in those roles (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004; Sargent, 2003). The individual moves to "disidentify" with any perceived stigma associated with a lower status occupation (Kreiner et al., 2006:662).

5.3.1 Changes to perceptions of the status of hospitality occupations during early career

Participant ratings of their hospitality occupational choice were, on average, higher than the ANU4 scale at each of the three interviews. However, the data indicate that from the first to the third interview, and with exposure to hospitality work in actual workplaces, 41 per cent of participant ratings were lower. This was particularly so for those who had abandoned their hospitality occupation aspiration (see Appendix Table AF2). This indicates that the

experience of the hospitality workplace/occupation had led to a negative re-evaluation of occupational status perception by some participants.

An exposure to the conditions of hospitality work obviously allows a greater understanding of the negative aspects of hospitality work, and therefore the perceived occupational status is reassessed over time. Exposure to a real workplace also provided a better understanding of the status of work as people continuously read the reactions of people to their occupation and had a greater exposure to the uncomplimentary opinions and experiences of others in the same occupation.

Given that occupational status is assessed against the participant's own desired social class, occupational status must „fit' with the individual's current or desired social class. Where the status of a hospitality occupation is incongruent with the individual's desired class perception, another occupation was considered.

5.3.2 Contingencies and the „zone of acceptable alternatives'

Gottfredson (1981) argues that people develop a „zone of acceptable alternatives' which is re-examined if the original occupational choice is denied in some way. In this case, 26 participants identified acceptable occupational alternatives in the first interview, but over the course of the interview series participants reported changing occupational alternatives (see Table 8). Only one had taken up their stated alternative at the end of the research program, but this was not necessarily a change of occupation but of industry sector, as the participant took up employment as a cook in the Armed Forces instead of the hospitality industry. Alternatively, ten participants had made occupational decisions based not on previously stated occupational alternatives, but on opportunity. For example, one participant who was

disappointed with hospitality work had become a trainee dental nurse in response to an advertisement with no prior aspiration to or knowledge of that occupation.

Of the 10 participants who made a change to their occupational choice and who were working in a new occupation at the end of the interview series, all chose alternative occupations at or below the occupational status ranking of their original hospitality choice (see Table 8). This suggests that career volition or capacity to make occupational decisions may be hampered by a perception that the individual only has access to low status work. This is consistent with the argument that they are limited by social factors such as lower socioeconomic background, lower education attainment and, perhaps, lower self-efficacy (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

There was also a greater level of ambiguity and opportunism in occupational decision making than is identified in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. Hospitality VET students in this study were not, as Gottfredson's (1981) theory suggests, logical, rational decision makers when entering a new occupation. Instead, they did whatever they could using a short term frame of reference and a perceived limited range of occupational options. They were limited by the lower educational attainment, by their social background and by a distorted view of the status and worth of hospitality work.

5.3.3 Perceived status of the specific hospitality workplace as a decision-making factor

This research has found that socioeconomic status of participants was a fundamental background factor in the occupational decision making of hospitality VET students, but a factor that was nevertheless not explicitly recognised or articulated by participants. In contrast, workplace prestige was a factor explicitly noted by participants as a decision-

making influence. Comments from participants indicated that whilst they understood that working in hospitality occupations meant occupying a certain (usually inflated) occupational status, that status was established or improved by the nature and reputation of the workplace. Take a chef as the example: despite the fact that the occupation remains the same irrespective of the workplace, it was the non-task elements, such as workplace reputation, that added to the status or value of the occupation. That is, comments indicated that being a chef may have been perceived as good, but being a chef in what might be perceived as a ‚higher class' or more prestigious establishment was better. The opposite was also true – where prestige of establishments was perceived to be low, the same occupation was seen to be a less attractive occupational option. This indicates that occupational decision making of hospitality VET students is not solely related to the occupation but also the prestige of the direct environment in which they envisage themselves working. The prestige of the workplace becomes more important to deflect the perception of a low status role with a higher prestige workplace, as the individual associates with the workplace and not necessarily their occupation (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). This adds a further level of complexity than identified in Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise.

It is possible to suggest that the sector-driven image of hospitality ‚glamour' influences people through a cognitive mechanism of ascribing a higher prestige to the workplace. In a broader expression of this point, the hospitality industry is surrounded by a mythology of glamour, fun and excitement. However, when people are exposed to the actual work of a hospitality role, the expected glamour, fun and excitement is often revealed to be a facade disguising an occupation that is of lower status. When people are able to see the actual work in hospitality as opposed to the expected fun and excitement, some individuals seek alternative occupations. In this study, 25 of the 43 participants who had entered the

workforce and who had completed the series of three interviews had chosen alternative occupations to their original hospitality choice.

5.4 *Summary – Occupational and socioeconomic status*

The role of class in occupational decision making is fundamental, broad ranging and complex. In this research, participants' areas of residence, occupational aspirations and parental occupations provided indications of class. Whilst social class of the family and parental influence had no overt influence on occupational decision making of hospitality VET students, it is argued they have inherent background influence by limiting the occupational options perceived to be available to participants.

This study indicates that socioeconomic background is a powerful factor, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds will identify with lower status hospitality roles and are more likely to access vocational education rather than higher education. This perpetuates a nexus between low status jobs and low socioeconomic status. Where individuals perceive people around them to work in lower status roles, or are living in areas of relative lower socioeconomic advantage, exposure to higher status occupations is limited. Therefore, higher status occupations may not be considered an occupational option. This research has found that second choice occupations were of a similar status rating to the hospitality aspiration; thus illustrating that occupational options are perceived on a relative occupational status continuum of readily accessible, but limited, occupations. That is, of a limited range of occupational options, hospitality may be perceived as an attractive and appealing occupational opportunity. Hospitality occupations will therefore be rated higher in occupational status than they actually are, relative to higher status occupations that are either

not considered (as they have not been included in the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives') or are considered out of reach due to lack of educational qualification, for example.

This research has found that the status of hospitality occupations is overrated by hospitality VET students but is moderated down over time after experience of the hospitality occupation is found to be unsatisfactory. In this group, aspiration to higher status occupations was satiated by inflating the status of hospitality – a process initially that allowed individuals to embrace the idea of upward status mobility without contact with the (social) reality of the work. The academic and social challenges usually associated with upward mobility are also circumvented. However, the later deflation of hospitality's status after contact with the workplace suggests an allied deflation of the perception of the original occupational aspiration.

Specific hospitality workplaces with a higher prestige, however, provide a means for raising expectations for the overall work experience. They provide a way for the individual to see hospitality jobs as being of higher occupational status than they in fact are.

Participants who opted out of a hospitality occupation and were accessing ongoing/higher education, identified new occupational aspirations above that of their original hospitality aspiration (n=3). However, of those who exited a hospitality occupation during or immediately after the VET program (n=10), nine participants reported working in jobs that were at similar or below the occupational status rating of their original hospitality aspiration. They did not return to their espoused ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. That is, occupations in which these participants were working were not identified as being an occupational contingency choice. This suggests a reliance on opportunity rather than agency when an initial occupational choice is found to be unsuitable or disappointing. Occupational status,

whilst operating as an implicit or background factor in occupational decision making in hospitality VET students, is fundamental, potent and provides a platform on which occupational interest is based. The role of interest in occupational decision making of VET hospitality students is now discussed.

5.5 *The role of interest in occupational decision making*

The following section discusses the research response to the second research sub-question:

RQ2: What role does „interest' play as an antecedent to occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise posits that people will make final decisions regarding occupations based on what they are interested in. This research has found that interest in occupations is developed in response to differing factors over time. That is, participants with long term interests (i.e. more than 24 months before the time of making a decision on an occupation) were influenced by close relationships; family and friends were the most reported source of information about working in hospitality, although not all of these individuals had actually worked in the sector. This is consistent with the work of Gottfredson (1981) who suggests that the easiest and most accessible source of resources will be availed first. This research found that participants used the most readily available source of information even if it was not the most accurate or comprehensive. Where family and friends are consulted, the generally accepted perceived status value of occupations will be perpetuated and individuals are constrained by the climate of opinion in the „social space' in which the individual and their social group exists. That is, perceptions of what is a „good job' are relative to the perceptions of those in an individual's immediate family and social circle.

This research also identified that participants developed an interest in a hospitality occupation in school cookery classes or work experience programs. Exposure to school level classes, for example, has an influence in occupational decision making and that experience remains with individuals until they come to be making an occupational choice. The findings indicate that individuals rely heavily on their exposure to school classes for inspiration and the development of interest in occupations. Therefore, some participants had chosen to become a chef despite the reality that cooking classes are fundamentally different to working in a commercial kitchen. Cooking for a family or in a school classroom is quite different in regard to pace and skill requirement to working in a fast-paced restaurant, hospital or cafe. So too, cooking, whilst forming part of the role of a cook or chef, can be a minor part of the actual role.

Other occupational options that have cooking or knowledge of food as an element (e.g. food technologist, nutritionist, dietary aide, catering teacher and home economist) were not mentioned at all. Schools offer only hospitality VET courses that are directly connected with an occupational outcome such as being a cook or a waiter. It is apparent that having limited or no exposure to broader occupational options, perhaps due to social factors as previously discussed, prevents broader occupational interests being developed. It is also apparent that as hospitality VET courses are competency based, academic effort is minimised and a low level qualification is provided (i.e. Certificate I or II). This suggests that individuals undertaking VET courses are either incapable of achieving, or not motivated to achieve at, the higher level required to pursue more academically challenging occupations. This research confirms that VET programs are perceived to be an option of last resort for those with limited capacity or interest to achieve at higher academic levels (Anlezark et al., 2006; Nguyen, 2010). Judging by the group of participants interviewed, these students are destined for lower status,

lower skilled roles. This is despite the fact that such courses could better provide for a greater range of occupations in hospitality or related sectors (for example, hotel management, food technologist and home economist) (Myfuture Website, 2010).

Choosing subjects for a Year 11 and 12 course of study was also found to be related to the existence of a hospitality VET course indicating that occupational choices may have been developed from VET courses on offer rather than from an occupational interest *per se*. Occupational choices made in this fashion suggest a student's interest in a specific occupation was limited by the course offering of the school, not necessarily by the occupational interests of the participant. Such course offerings reduce the range of occupational options within the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. This adds an element of complexity to the interest–occupational choice relationship, as much of the career choice literature presupposes that an interest will drive occupational choices. However, this research indicates that interest in an occupation in hospitality may be driven by the availability and attractiveness of a non-academic hospitality VET course. This is particularly so for participants who perceived the hospitality VET course as their only option to move through their final years at school.

The literature suggests that interest is also generated or supported by the research that individuals undertake to learn about occupations. This study indicates that very little formal research had been conducted by participants to support an aspiration to a hospitality occupation (see Table 12). The data indicate an underlying confidence in participants that was driven by a Weikian sense of plausibility rather than fact. This is evident as participants gave only rudimentary details about their understanding of the "long hours" and "hard work" associated with a hospitality occupation. When pressed for further detail in regard to working/workplace conditions, few participants could provide any. There was little detail

given on what made the work „hard' or what was meant by „long hours'. Weick (1995) suggests that individuals need just enough information about a topic (e.g. an occupation) to pursue it; all else was constructed around the participant's plausible concept of an occupational aspiration. This was the case even if the central premise or reason for entering into a hospitality occupation was based on limited information. Given a range of inhibiting factors such as conflicting career advice from differing sources (e.g. teachers, parents, hospitality industry personnel), personal immaturity and lack of exposure to the hospitality workplace as a worker rather than as a patron, the expectations of what participants reported in the first interview was often contrary to their experiences during their VET course.

Over the series of three interviews, a process of „sensemaking' emerged in regard to the development of an understanding of the demands and qualities of hospitality work. A mythology of hospitality was replaced with an ongoing and meaningful, but stressful (and therefore in terms of initial expectations, disappointing), experience of the workplace. This included a realisation of workplace conditions and, more importantly, the relationships within the workplace. A more objective understanding of what it means to work long, unsociable hours with people (customers and peers/management) and in a stressful environment was developed. That is, whilst participants indicated that long hours and hard work was expected, the plausibility that it "would be alright" because of the enjoyment of task-oriented interests such as cooking, compensated. However, the initial plausibility that positive expectations of work in hospitality would become a reality was disappointed in some participants by poor work conditions and unsatisfactory workplace relationships.

This research indicates that the participants' propensity to overestimate (or glamorise) the enjoyment of working in a hospitality occupation is at least partly due to a lack of formal research and school information on the actuality of the hospitality environment. This

contributes to attrition from the industry in early career as positive expectations of working in a hospitality occupation are dissipated by the reality of the demands of hospitality work. For some participants, the concept of being a chef or running one's own nightclub initially had a certain „romantic' appeal which can be attributed to the marketing-driven nature of the hospitality sector. This appeal, however, did not take long to vanish for a proportion of the participants.

5.5.1 Longitudinal change in the importance of specific interest factors

This research has found that the reasons or rationale given by participants to enter and then remain in a hospitality occupation changed over time. Initially, participants identified four motivators. Task-oriented motivators (e.g. cooking and waiting tables) were the most prevalent reason for entering hospitality (see Table 10). Other reasons included "having fun", the "opportunity to travel" and "knowing people in the industry". However, when questioned at the final interview, all participants who had remained in a hospitality occupation cited a vitally important factor: the relationships they had developed with their co-workers, supervisors and, in some cases, customers/guests. The task-oriented factors such as „cooking' or „waiting tables' were either secondary or not mentioned at all.

Over time, participants indicated that vocational task interest faded and gave way to the need for supporting structures of good workplace relationships. Indeed, it was widely reported that should relationships in the workplace significantly deteriorate beyond a threshold of tolerance, participants suggested that they would consider leaving that employment. This research has found that interest, formed by occupationally related (but not occupationally accurate) tasks such as cooking and waiting, provided a catalyst for an occupational choice, but this was not sufficiently robust to maintain occupational aspiration over time. This is

especially so where dissatisfaction or disillusionment with the original aspiration is experienced. Initial commitment to an occupation based on task-oriented interests is not sufficient to prevent early career attrition from the hospitality workplace, at least partly because tasks lack variety and are highly pressured. Data indicate that despite even the most fervent espoused commitment to undertake hospitality work, only 18 of the 49 participants who completed the interview series had remained in the sector once their hospitality VET program had been completed.

5.6 *Overview - Interest*

This research has identified that interest in occupations is either developed long term with influence from family or friends, or through exposure to school classes. However, occupational decision making is also made in response to a pressing need to choose subjects for a Year 11 or 12 course of study. In the case of this sample group, they chose hospitality either because it was an attractive VET option with low academic challenge, or they had been „pigeon-holed' into a vocational education stream. Regardless of their rationale, participants had a limited understanding of hospitality work and their interest was largely built on the plausibility of their perceptions of their chosen occupation, rather than formal or extensive research. At the point of making an initial occupational choice, the most salient interest factors were task oriented and often associated with school-based classes such as cooking. However, over time this changed and those who remained in the industry cited working relationships as the most prevalent interest factor and one that contributed to the decision to remain in or leave a workplace or occupation. Interest in task-related factors is not robust enough to keep an individual in a job or workplace where relationships with colleagues, managers and customers are not satisfactory. This is an important factor in early career

attrition from hospitality occupations. Turnover intention is scrutinised by the application of Social Cognitive Career Theory and is discussed further.

5.7 *Social Cognitive Career Theory and occupational decision making in hospitality VET students*

The following discussion addresses the third research sub-question:

RQ3: How do „self-efficacy', 'goal orientation' and „outcome expectation' interact to achieve occupational decision making in hospitality VET students?

The „zone of acceptable alternatives' does not encompass the final suite of occupational options for hospitality VET students. Therefore, during the initial exposure to work, occupational decision making will continue. As discussed previously, this research has used Lent et al.'s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory as a possible model to work with Gottfredson's (1981) Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. Social Cognitive Career Theory is grounded in Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and argues that occupational decisions will be made based on the consideration of the interplay between self-efficacy, goal orientation and outcome expectation.

5.7.1 Developing self-efficacy

Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory was introduced to the career decision-making literature by Hackett and Betz (1981). It suggests that for any individual to pursue an occupational choice, self-efficacy, or confidence in ability, must be present. However, self-efficacy is not sufficient to motivate pursuit of an occupational aspiration alone, it must be coupled with another element such as outcome expectation, goals or interest; hence, self-

efficacy plays an important role as part of the process of triadic reciprocal determinism as identified in Social Cognitive Career Theory (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994).

This research found that whilst self-efficacy was reported as ‚high' (as evidenced by a rating above seven on a one to ten scale) by participants during the second interview (n=27), it did not appear to be related to other, objective measures of competence or experience in work-related tasks. Indeed, Weick (1995) suggests that self-efficacy need not be correlated with external measures of competence for it to provide impetus or motivation toward an intended activity and, in this case, the development of occupational aspiration. In this context, an enjoyment or experience of school-based activities (e.g. cooking classes) appears to be the source of confidence in participants' own abilities to move into a hospitality occupation. The initial confidence that participants have in their own abilities to achieve their hospitality occupational aspiration is at odds with their lack of research into their chosen hospitality occupation. Self-efficacy, then, has been created around interest and success in a non-academically demanding school subject, rather than actual competence or understanding of occupational demands. Here we see the interaction of interest and self-efficacy working together to achieve an occupational aspiration. First, there is interest and enjoyment of occupationally related tasks, and then a sense of being able to successfully undertake work in a hospitality occupation.

This research has found that over time, self-reported confidence ratings had changed; confidence ratings for participants who had continued with a hospitality occupation were compared between the second and third interviews. This comparison found that seven participants reported an increase of between one and seven 'points' (on a scale of one to ten) between the second and third interviews in regard to their feeling of confidence for achieving their career goal, and five participants reported a decrease of between 0.5 and three 'points'.

One remained the same and five were unable to be determined. Participants finished a full school year of a vocational course with confidence in their own abilities to achieve their occupational outcome. However, moving into the hospitality workplace and gaining experience and a greater level of occupational competence did not necessarily develop a sense of self-efficacy for all participants (five reported a decrease in confidence). For them, self-efficacy was a ‚moving target' that is continually extended by new learning and achievement. Gaining new skills and qualifications was cited by participants as being an underpinning factor to improving confidence in achieving occupational aspirations. However, this is despite the fact that overall, self-efficacy ratings may not have improved in line with their vocational learning experiences. This suggests that an increase in skills and knowledge of hospitality work does not necessarily lead to a higher sense of self-efficacy.

5.7.2 Self-efficacy, skill development and motivation

Learning and skill development were identified in this research as an underpinning factor to maintaining or increasing levels of self-efficacy. Participant comments suggest that workplace and colleague contributions to the development of skills was a salient factor in perpetuating interest in a hospitality occupation and maintaining a sense of self-efficacy. Self-Efficacy Theory suggests that where an individual fails to develop self-efficacy during the pursuit of an activity, it is unlikely that they will maintain an interest in or continue to pursue that activity (Betz & Hackett, 1987). This idea has implications for early career attrition. In the hospitality VET context, participants could easily take opportunities to change their occupational choices during the hospitality VET program. That is, they had an opportunity to experience the hospitality workplace before being committed to a role as an employee. If the hospitality VET experience was negative or disappointing, another occupation was considered. This is illustrated by the finding that of the 49 participants who

completed all three interviews, only 18 participants were working in a hospitality occupation and six were still at school and maintaining an interest in a hospitality occupation; 25, therefore, had chosen to pursue another occupation or were working in a different sector (i.e. the armed forces, institutional catering).

5.7.3 Self-efficacy and relationships with others

Despite framing a question specifically on „confidence' richer data comes from the participants' general narrative highlighting issues of self-efficacy in regard to the relationship between feeling confident and capable in the workplace, and the relationships with people in that workplace. This supports the finding that workplace relationships as a perpetuator of interest and as a motivator to remain in a hospitality occupation are important.

5.8 *Overview – Self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy, in the context of this research, is organisationally or workplace bound. It is most apparent as part of participants' processes of reviewing an occupational choice rather than as part of making an initial occupational choice. Changes in an individual's sense of self-efficacy depends on the work environment and the relationships formed within it much more than it depends on assessment of vocational task competence. Where a perceived or experienced lack of opportunity for learning and unsupportive relationships with colleagues exists, a sense of diminished self-efficacy can provide a catalytic rationale for discontinuing an aspiration to a hospitality occupation. However, self-efficacy is intertwined with the two other elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory: goal orientation and outcome expectation. These are further discussed below.

5.9 *Goal orientation and outcome expectation*

Lent et al., (1994) argue that goals drive occupational ambition rather than choice being driven by the individual's opportunistic or predetermined response to external factors. They define their concept of goal orientation as the mechanism by which an individual's motivation is carried forward on the basis of career plans, decisions, aspirations and expressed choices. This concept is complemented by an individual's expectations that planned outcomes can be achieved and are attractive enough to pursue. The constructs of goal orientation and outcome expectation are discussed together due to this strong connection.

This research illustrates that participants may not have reported any other firm occupational option apart from that in hospitality (see Table 13). This may be through choice (e.g. "it's all I've ever wanted to do") or the result of some process of elimination (e.g. "I had to do something, and this is it"), therefore there is an indication that occupational goals may not necessarily be devised by a process of research and refusal but through a perceived limitation of other options (e.g. "I don't know what else to do"). Given the high incidence of participants suggesting few or no occupational contingency plans across the series of interviews, it is clear that participants' goal orientations were fixed on a single occupation or a very narrow band of occupations. This finding indicates that either participants' occupational options are solidified and no other option is required, or participants have arrived at an occupational choice by default as few options are perceived to exist. For example, "I want to be a chef" is a solidified occupational choice as opposed to becoming a chef because that is the only choice left. Participants stated that no other options had been considered and therefore there exists an implicit expectation that the single occupational goal would come to fruition. Having few or a single occupational option indicates that all effort is

invested in that occupational choice; perhaps not because of ambition or desire to see the goal achieved, but due to perceived limited options. However, most participants (66 per cent) had changed their occupational choice by the third and final interview (see Appendix Table AF2) indicating that the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' is still dynamic at the end of the VET program, even if limited options are identified.

As previously discussed, an occupational goal based on interest is not robust enough to maintain a hospitality occupation if the experience of hospitality work is unsatisfactory. The data also suggest that once interest wanes, outcome expectation is changed. That is, the original occupation is eliminated as an attractive occupational outcome to the extent that at the final interview, one participant had literally forgotten her original aspiration to a hospitality occupation altogether in favour of an occupation in business. Findings of this research indicate that once the original goal had been disconfirmed, participants did not return to an espoused alternative (if they had one); rather, they took up employment in previously unconsidered occupations with a similar or lower status to their hospitality occupation. This indicates an almost opportunistic or *ad hoc* occupational option is taken without a considered approach driven by goal orientation. Where no firm alternative occupational goal had been identified, outcome expectation was also nondescript. That is, if an individual has no commitment to a particular occupation, a clear expectation of occupational outcome cannot be identified and no plan of action to achieve that occupational outcome can be implemented. Therefore, individuals are open to making decisions based on opportunity, not occupational planning or rational choice.

For participants who had entered into an apprenticeship (33 per cent of those completing the interview series), there was an explicit expectation that their qualification would be completed, identifying an occupational outcome expectation of gaining a trade. However,

post-apprenticeship goal expectations were no clearer than for those participants not in an apprenticeship. This suggests that a training contract (i.e. an apprenticeship) with a defined occupational outcome (i.e. trade qualification) provides individuals with an external framework around which outcome expectation and goals can be built and pursued. Such a structure may provide support and surety during the transitional period from student to employee.

Data indicate that hospitality VET students illustrate little career planning activity. This is not consistent with robust goal orientation as suggested by Lent et al., (1994). That is, whilst participants identified an occupational outcome, the pathway to that outcome is not clear or considered and therefore the expectation of an outcome is also unclear or ill defined. Participants' comments suggested that completion of more vocational courses would provide them with entry into their chosen occupation. However, which course and how it would provide advantages to meeting an occupational outcome were not well conceived or articulated. Poorly conceived goals with ill-conceived outcome expectations do not support achievement of occupational aspiration, thus making the individual vulnerable to change and modification of occupational aspirations.

The reliance on attending courses and collecting Certificates with no firm indication of what is involved or how such competencies will add value to a suite of employability skills is indicative of ill-conceived goal orientation and outcome expectation. Whilst participants were firm in their occupational aspirations, they lacked understanding of the path to achieve their goal. Participants believed that heading in the "right general direction" doing the right "sort of Certificates" at "some sort of institution" would put them on the right road to reach their intended destination and realisation of their outcome expectation. As previously discussed, this appears to be underpinned by an optimism and self-efficacy which is

developed out of an accepted plausibility, often cemented by an initially unshakeable occupational interest.

As the data suggest, much of the reported occupational decision making had been preceded by opportunistic events such as having to choose a course for college or following an option precipitated by the enjoyment of a school-based class (e.g. cooking). Having no clear plans in regard to further training is also indicative of a low level of information search prior to making an occupational choice. Change of occupational choice and attrition from hospitality occupations may be attributed to this issue as poorly researched, loose goals with ill-defined outcome expectations are less likely to come to fruition (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1999). Expectations are more easily disconfirmed where they are predicated on little or erroneous occupational information.

Whilst goal orientation and outcome expectation are central to the concept of Social Cognitive Career Theory, there is an implicit expectation that the occupational goal is not only firm but arrived at through a process of decisive measures such as investigation and commitment. A clear understanding of a desired or expected outcome is predicated on such research and commitment. However, this research has found no widespread or robust examples of planning or concerted research into any occupational choice – be it an initial hospitality oriented occupation or any other contingency. Findings also suggest that, particularly where occupational choices change, outcome expectation is poorly defined and therefore poorly supported by coordinated goal achievement mechanisms such as appropriate training or pursuit of early career opportunities.

5.10 *Overview – goal orientation and outcome expectation*

This research has shown that whilst goal orientation and outcome expectation were present, they were not robust or articulated well. That is, goals could be identified and associated with an outcome, but information search and planning was not identified. This indicates that a weak dedication to an occupational goal with little conviction to an outcome rendered participants susceptible to a change of occupational choice. However, self-efficacy was found to be high (82 per cent with a self-reported confidence rating above seven out of 10) among participants at the second interview despite a lack of external measures of competence. This was fortified by good working relationships and learning opportunities afforded by workplace colleagues and managers. Where supportive working relationships were reported, there was less inclination to early career attrition from the hospitality workplace; where poor relationships undermined self-efficacy, there was a greater propensity for participants to make a different occupational choice.

5.11 *Workplace relationships as a factor in occupational decision making*

This section deals with the final research sub-question:

RQ4: What other elements impact on the occupational decision making process in hospitality VET students during early career experiences?

The role of positive and supportive relationships with colleagues, managers and customers/guests was reported as fundamental to remaining in a hospitality occupation. Supportive working relationships allowed for the development of self-efficacy which provided participants with continued interest in and a desire to maintain their employment in their chosen occupation. Conversely, where relationships were poor, self-efficacy was negatively affected and interest in the occupation diminished – sometimes to the point where

an alternative occupation was chosen. The findings of this research support the argument for a consolidated model of occupational decision making for hospitality VET students. Occupational status and interest are so fundamental to the occupational decision making of this cohort that they need to be explicitly noted. However, Social Cognitive Career Theory provides for an early career assessment of occupational decision making in the context of the VET program and early workplace experience.

5.12 *Research limitations*

This research was necessarily bound by the temporal and financial limitations associated with a four year doctorate candidature. A longitudinal approach over a longer period may better examine factors associated with the phenomenon under scrutiny (Bergman & Magnusson in Magnusson & Bergman, 1990; Menard, 2002). In this case, examining the background of participants from an earlier age may provide a more expansive investigation of the early development of occupational preferences; particularly in regard to the ways in which sex-typing of occupations impacts on early perceptions of occupations (Gottfredson, 1981). Real-time investigations also eliminate a level of uncertainty associated with relying on the memory of subjects, which is not always an accurate representation of actual experiences (Menard, 2002). However, this method would require decades to execute and would incur significant costs (Ticehurst & Veal, 1999). So too, a longer term longitudinal research project would require a greater number of research subjects to allow for a higher level of mortality (Ticehurst & Veal, 1999). This research instead focuses on the most critical aspect of occupational decision making in the particular context under investigation – that being the late adolescence transition from student to worker. Therefore, whilst still a genuine longitudinal research project, this research has been able to execute a study within the

constraints of the time and finances due to the short cycle timeframe of the hospitality VET program.

5.13 *Future research opportunities*

There are a number of opportunities for further research identified from the conduct and results of this study. It is suggested that the most pressing of these is to apply the consolidated model to other VET programs in order to ascertain the general applicability of the model. For example, applying the consolidated model to examine the decision-making processes of students undertaking VET courses in Automotive, Business or Information Technology may uncover varying factors of influence on occupational decision making. However, it is expected that significant value will be derived from applying the same research methodology in contexts where occupational status of roles in hospitality are viewed and valued differently. For example, where hospitality roles are perceived more as professional occupations of higher status than they are in Australia, occupational decision making may rest on different background factors – social class in particular.

As discussed in the limitations section of this chapter, undertaking a longitudinal research program that investigates the development of occupational decision making from the earliest point of occupational awareness in early childhood would provide a more comprehensive test of the consolidated model. This methodological design would provide insights into occupational decision making to test the consolidated model. Indeed, much like the work of Vaillant on ageing (2003), it could provide a broader understanding of developmental, social and genetic factors impacting on the occupational decisions of individuals.

5.14 *Summary*

This chapter has discussed the research results as they apply to each of the research questions. The consolidated model bringing together Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory was introduced and discussed. Limitations and further research opportunities were identified and briefly discussed. The following chapter provides a brief discussion regarding the theoretical contribution and practical implications of this research.

Chapter Six

Theoretical Contribution &
Practical Implications of this Research

6 Theoretical Contribution and Practical Implications

6.1 *Introduction*

The objectives of this chapter are two-fold. Firstly, it will identify the theoretical contribution of this research as it relates to the over-arching theoretical question as presented in Chapter Two. Secondly, it will present practical and policy implications relating to the delivery of hospitality VET courses in a regional economy.

6.2 *The case for a consolidated model – theoretical and practical implications*

This research has identified that, in this context, the existing theories of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory do not individually encompass occupational decision making in hospitality VET students. The Theory of Circumscription and Compromise provides a useful framework for considering occupational choice, particularly as it recognises the impact of important elements from early childhood and social location into the lengthy process of occupational decision making over time. However, it lacks insight into the socio-cognitive elements of the occupational decision-making process of individuals during the transitional period from school to work that is afforded by Social Cognitive Career Theory. This current research indicates that the two bodies of theory can be combined to examine and explain occupational decision making and maintenance into early career. However, the consolidated theories need to be amended through the addition of three important ideas.

Firstly, that the process of occupational choice is not rational, instead it is bound not only by family and social location but also by limited and variably accurate information; Gottfredson's 'zone of acceptable alternatives' is both limited and its genesis, in any

particular situation, complex. For example, in this case the existence of a limited-choice VET program and subscription to a sector- and media-driven „mythology' of hospitality work led to irrational choices by most participants from the sample. This leads to the second idea: a concept is required to describe the circumstances of individuals seeking meaning in this family-related, information-poor and institutionally structured situation.

The Karl Weick (1995) concept of plausibility, added to the social cognitive assessment of the fit between their perception of social class, interest and available occupations, serves to describe a process that is almost converse to a rational choice model. That it is, for some individuals, rather than coming to a „zone of acceptable alternatives' derived from a process of circumscribing occupations that do not fit an individual's idea of a suitable occupation, they find themselves with so few options that their interest in an occupation is moulded to fit that available option. This research has identified that some individuals believe themselves to have so few occupational choices that they are effectively unable to make a rational occupational choice. Poor academic record, limited occupational interests or a limited understanding of alternative occupations lead some individuals to believe that they had no choice. This research has identified that, in some cases, when the only occupation perceived to be available to them (for example, cooking) was unsatisfactory, they made irrational and opportunistic choices to enter into an equally low or lower status job (for example, frozen food factory worker). Social Cognitive Career Theory, however, recognises that occupational decision making is highly complex and often subject to non-rational, often emotional, factors that influence the interaction of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation. However, this theory in isolation does not explicitly address the precursors to occupational choice present in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. Greater synergy exists in linking the two theories to identify occupational decision-making behaviour of hospitality VET students

Thirdly, occupational decision making is not completed at the end of the school career where one enters into an occupation. Given the contemporary practice of exposing senior school students to the workplace via VET courses in Australia, the occupational decision-making process is elongated over time, is less final than traditional transitions from student to employee/worker (as a commitment to a job is not required to gain work experience), and influenced by exposure to a range of employers though work placement opportunities. This allows individuals to make a decision as to the suitability of the occupational choice and to seek another if the initial one is unsatisfactory. Therefore, the hospitality VET course may be used as an opportunity to discount occupations rather than to confirm that an occupational choice is suitable.

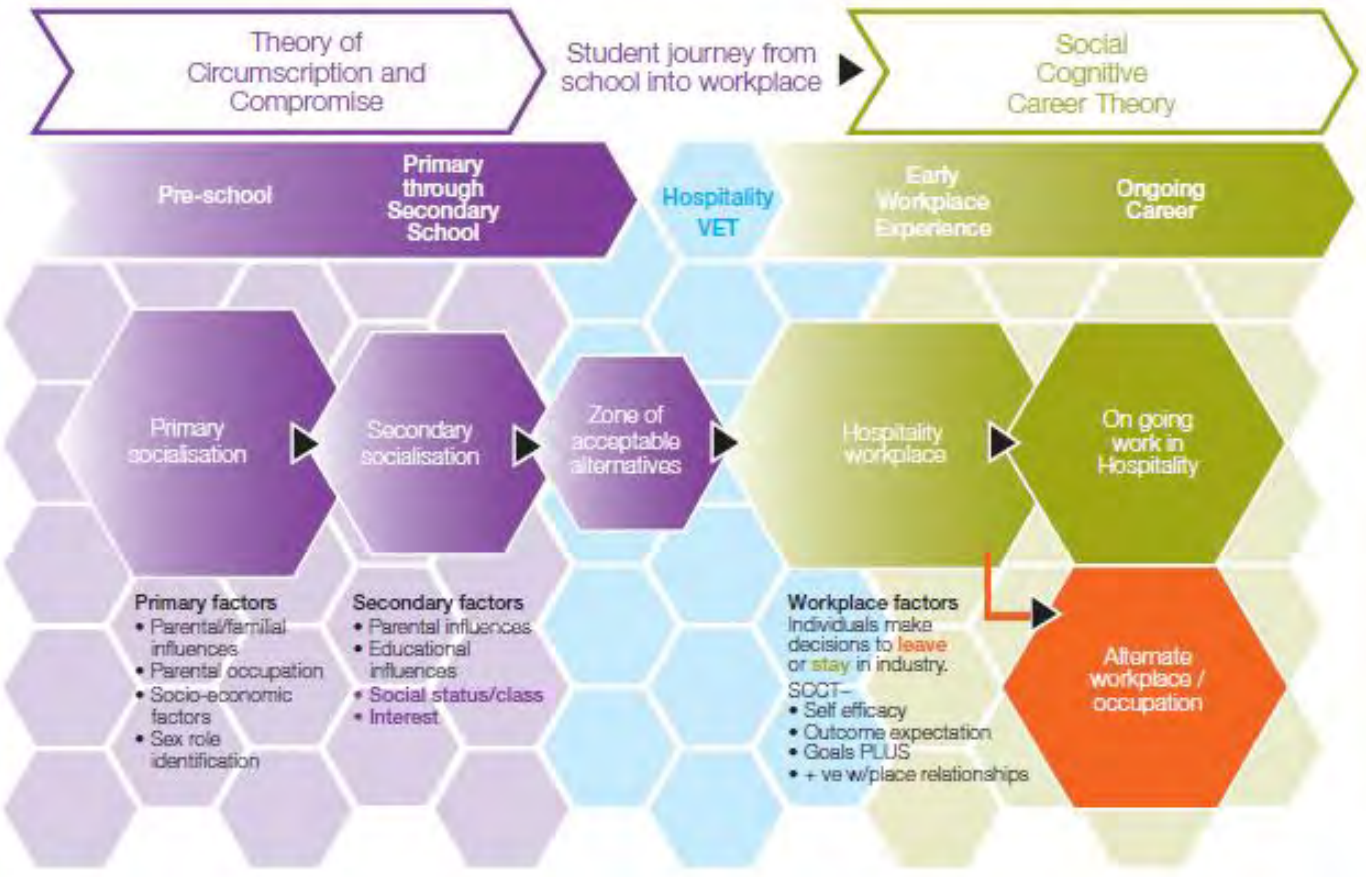
Whilst Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise provides a structure to understand the socially learned precursors to occupational choice, it does not go far enough to adequately address the processes employed during the transitional period of a VET program. Social Cognitive Career Theory, however, recognises that occupational decision making is highly complex and often subject to non-rational, often emotional, factors that influence decision making during early workplace experiences. However, this theory in isolation does not explicitly address the precursors to occupational choice present in Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. Greater synergy exists in linking the two theories to identify occupational decision-making behaviour of hospitality VET students. The rationale for a consolidated model is now discussed further.

6.2.1 The consolidated model explained

A consolidated model that includes the transition from VET student to worker represents a more comprehensive view of occupational decision making in the hospitality VET context

(see Figure 7). It better recognises the precursors that impact on the formation of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' and the overlapping assessment of occupational choice during the hospitality VET course. This model also illustrates that, contrary to the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, hospitality VET students do not return to the rational decision-making processes of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' when seeking occupational alternatives to their first occupational choice, but rather they apply for and work in jobs on an opportunistic basis. This research indicates that this may be related to the fact that goals are not robust and outcome expectations are often invested in a single occupation and, when disappointed, the individual makes immediate *ad hoc* occupational decisions.

Figure 7. Consolidated occupational decision-making model



The hospitality VET course allows students to make an occupational decision then sample the hospitality job and workplace before making a final occupational decision at the end of their school career. This process necessarily demands a consolidated model to take into consideration the antecedents to making an initial choice to enter a hospitality occupation (such as occupational status and interest), and then address the social cognitive machinations associated with the assessment of the occupational choice during the VET course and early career. The primary factors of the above model were not included in this research as the research focus was on the transitional period between school and work during the hospitality VET course. It is accepted that these underpinning elements have an impact on occupational decision making, but the scope of this research could not accommodate investigation into these elements.

6.2.2 Arriving at a ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' – social class and interest

The secondary factors of the model, specifically social class and interest, were found to have a fundamental influence on occupational decision making in hospitality VET students. This research confirmed that people undertaking vocational education are more likely to come from and remain in lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and that interest in occupations is informed by exposure to school-based activities and classes as well as input from people within the individual's 'social space'. These factors contribute to the development of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' from which individuals make their occupational choice. This research has found that at the point of making an initial occupational choice (i.e. upon commencement of their hospitality VET course), participants reported having few, if any, occupational alternatives apart from their hospitality aspiration. Where alternatives were identified, they were of a similar occupational status to that of their choice of hospitality occupation. This is consistent with the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise which

indicates that people remain in a similar occupational status as their self-identified social class.

6.2.3 The ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' – a contrary view to existing theory

Contrary to Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, this research has found that those who do not maintain a commitment to a hospitality occupation do not return to the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. Therefore, an additional component has been included in the consolidated model („Alternate workplace/occupation') to allow for identification of alternate occupational choices. As discussed previously, these alternatives were not pre-considered and were identified by chance or random opportunity, such as a newspaper advertisement. However, this research illustrates that opportunistic occupational opportunities were rated equal to or lower than the original hospitality choice. This indicates that despite divesting the hospitality occupation from the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives', a broader range of occupational alternatives are not investigated and that exploration of other occupations with similar interest factors is not undertaken. In terms of attrition from the hospitality sector, hospitality VET students in this research did not consider other hospitality occupations to their original choice; instead, they decided against the sector in its entirety. This represents a loss to the sector of a labour resource even before individuals are employed in the sector. The way in which individuals indentify occupational aspiration after disconfirmation of an original occupation choice is an area open to further research opportunity.

The examination of secondary factors such as social status and interest in this consolidated model is important in this context as it provides an indication of how individuals come to include a hospitality occupation in their ‚zone of acceptable alternatives'. However,

occupational decision making in hospitality VET students does not end there; it continues over the span of the VET course and into early career. It is imperative that subsequent cognitive and practical processes assessing suitability of occupational choice be investigated; this is where Social Cognitive Career Theory provides insight.

6.2.4 Over-selling and under-delivering – the hospitality sector as an occupational option

Whilst hospitality occupations are rated in the lower half of the ANU4 status scales, this research found that participants consistently overrated their hospitality occupation; perceiving it to be of a higher occupational status than it is. This is indicative of an over-inflated expectation of the occupation and one that provides the individual with a sense of upward status mobility without the associated academic or social challenges usually required to attain such a status shift. Over the duration of the hospitality VET course, and with exposure to multiple hospitality workplaces, disconfirmation of expectation led to a change of occupational aspiration in 51 per cent of participants who completed all three interviews. In practical terms, this is consistent with labour turnover in the wider hospitality sector and suggests that attrition from hospitality occupations begins even before an individual is employed in the sector. This should be of particular concern to both the hospitality sector and VET educators as this represents a significant reduction in available labour and diminution of training effort. Given that an investment in training and skills development has been made in people with no intention of entering the sector, attrition also represents significant skills wastage.

Whilst it could be argued that access to greater levels of information regarding work in the hospitality sector may alleviate VET student overrating of hospitality occupations, it does not address the issue that where students perceive that they have limited alternative occupational

options they will rely on a developing their own positive view of the work to offset a ‚social taint' (Kreiner et al., 2006). The possible negative characteristics and conditions of hospitality occupations, such as long hours and poor pay, are initially presented as being outweighed by positives such as the opportunity to travel. It is argued that positive characteristics of hospitality work are delivered by those representing the sector and those teaching in hospitality VET courses as they have a vested interest in creating positive expectations in prospective hospitality workers. That is, the sector needs to attract employees and teachers need to fill hospitality VET courses whilst providing positive reinforcement for those students who may have limited occupational options. The issue of how hospitality occupations can be accurately represented to hospitality VET students for inclusion in a ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' and to avoid disconfirmation of occupational expectation provides an opportunity for further academic investigation.

6.3 *Practical and policy implications of this research*

6.3.1 Social frameworks, school course offerings and perceived limitations to occupational options

Participants in this research suggested that interest factors such as the enjoyment of cooking were fundamental precursors to choosing an occupation in hospitality. However, this research has found that hospitality VET students are presented with a limited range of occupations based on their espoused interest. For example, being a cook or chef was universally espoused as a natural occupational outcome of an enjoyment of cooking despite the fact that other occupations would accommodate such an interest. This indicates that social structures such as the family and school direct individuals onto a path that fits not only with interest but within perceived social frameworks such as socioeconomic background and occupational status. That is, if an individual has an interest in cooking and is from a lower

socioeconomic background without a strong interest in academic endeavours, being a cook is identified as a direct route to an occupation despite the fact that other occupations such as home economist, food stylist or nutritionist are possible. None of these alternate occupations was espoused by participants, indicating a lack of exposure to and knowledge of these options and a lack of career counselling support or capability in the school system and VET course to provide such exposure. This indicates that interest in aspects of certain occupations, such as cooking, are moulded to fit limited options on offer by the college system rather than options made available dependent on (possibly broader) career interests of students.

6.3.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory and ongoing assessment of occupational choice in hospitality VET students – Self-efficacy and the workplace

Social Cognitive Career Theory informs the workplace-based component of the above model. The roles of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation in occupational decision making are complex and intertwined, and therefore must be examined collectively. The individual's consideration of self-efficacy, occupational goals and outcome expectation are influenced by the experience of work during the hospitality VET course and early career, and therefore lend themselves to examination with consideration to practical implications.

Self-efficacy is impacted by the workplace through the relationships people build with others. Where relationships are not supportive, people change occupations or workplaces to find one that is more conducive to building confidence, skills and good interpersonal relationships. The quality of workplace relationships has been specifically identified in this research alongside the other elements of Social Cognitive Career Theory as a salient factor in occupational decision making in hospitality VET students.

Whilst hospitality is a sector renowned for its transactional approach to people management (Lindsay & McQuaid, 2004), it requires a relational approach to business operations to maintain a customer base through repeat visitation and guest satisfaction. However, hospitality is a highly casualised sector with low occupational status ratings, unattractive working conditions and high labour turnover (Carbery, Garavan, O'Brien & McDonnell, 2003). These factors are not conducive to developing working relationships that support self-efficacy through personal encouragement, skills development and positive reinforcement of an individual's occupational choice (Lashley, 2009). Despite this, participants reporting that they valued their workplace relationships and that workplace relationships underpinned a sense of self-efficacy were those who had remained in the sector; this is despite prevailing conditions that included low wages and unsociable hours. This indicates that the impact of unattractive working conditions can be mediated by workplace relationships that support personal and professional development, and that are personally enriching for the individual. A move away from traditional transactional forms of workplace interaction to relational ones in this sector, perhaps unsurprisingly, reduces labour turnover and improves employee commitment to the workplace and occupation.

Consistent with Tasmanian training statistics (Skills Tasmania, 2008), this research has found that attrition from the hospitality sector post vocational education is high. Whilst hospitality VET courses offer nationally recognised qualifications designed to prepare students for entry into their chose occupation, they are recognised as providing a poor alignment to actual workplace conditions. The lack of engagement between VET providers and industry has been identified as an underlying issue that creates a disparity between training and the ‚real world' of hospitality (Lashley, 2009). With such a disparity between the VET course and the

hospitality workplace, student self-efficacy, particularly in regard to confidence in their own skills and abilities, may be negatively affected.

The hospitality sector also has a role to play in delivering experiences that support the development of self-efficacy in students undertaking hospitality VET courses. Given the shrinking pool of labour from which hospitality workers are drawn, it is counterproductive to maintain high attrition from training and high labour turnover. This research has identified that attrition from the sector occurs post training and in early career, and is related to experiences that diminish self-efficacy during and immediately after the hospitality VET course. This indicates that hospitality VET students are exposed to unsupportive, and in some cases unlawful, workplace practices (e.g. bullying) that adversely impact on the decision to remain in the job or the sector. Therefore, the development and maintenance of self-efficacy is important when examining factors relating to occupational decision making in hospitality VET students. Self-efficacy also underpins the development of goals and outcome expectations and these factors are discussed further.

6.3.3 Goals, occupational choice and commitment

Social Cognitive Career Theory identifies that a clear occupational goal or a commitment to an occupation gives individuals direction and provides for a plan of action. Goal setting in regard to occupational choice is a natural extension of the ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' as identified in the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, and this relationship is illustrated in the consolidated model.

This research found that whilst participants had an occupation in mind, their understanding of the job, the conditions of the occupation and how to go about achieving their occupational

goals (e.g. through training) were not well articulated or understood. Where occupational goals were not well formed, were unsupported by an apprenticeship and outcome expectations were not robust, individuals had less commitment to an occupational choice. They subsequently abandoned their aspiration to a hospitality occupation and made opportunistic decisions to enter other occupations. Attrition from the hospitality sector due to limited commitment to an occupational goal results in skills wastage. It also indicates a lack of career planning and support for people who enter into hospitality VET courses because they perceive few alternatives, either due to social factors or a lack of interest in or incapacity to undertake academic studies. More realistic exposure to the actuality of work in hospitality occupations, and greater instruction regarding occupational choice and career planning before allowing students to enter into hospitality VET courses, may prove beneficial. However, as previously stated, this is an area for future academic study.

6.3.4 Outcome expectation and commitment to an occupation

The third component of Social Cognitive Career Theory is outcome expectation and is intertwined with both self-efficacy and goals. This research has identified that hospitality VET students build their occupational outcome expectations upon their own understanding of plausible occupational outcomes rather than a robust understanding of the hospitality sector and its demands. Other research has shown that VET courses are often used by students as a means of eliminating occupational options rather than preparing for entry into a chosen occupation (Anlezark et al., 2006). Given that students have a distorted expectation of their hospitality occupational choice and that the hospitality VET program prepares people poorly for the world of hospitality work, it is suggested that a better means of providing a realistic job preview be devised prior to entry into a hospitality VET program. This is an education policy issue and one to be considered also by the hospitality sector as people interested in

hospitality occupations are being disenchanted before reaching the sector as an employee. Unrealistic expectations, poor preparation and a poor introduction to the world of hospitality work have been identified as precursors for abandonment of hospitality occupations. Identifying these issues, as well as the dynamic and contributory influences of self-efficacy and occupational goals prior to attrition from a hospitality occupation, may well improve retention from the hospitality VET course and convert VET students to hospitality employees.

6.4 *Summary*

This chapter has identified that, consistent with Circumscription and Compromise, social background, class and interest provide a framework for a ‚zone of acceptable alternatives' from which occupational choice are drawn. However, contrary to that theory, participants did not return to an original suite of occupational options when the hospitality occupation was dismissed and interest shifted from vocational task orientation to a relational one. When changing occupational choices during the VET course, participants looked to training or opportunities that were not previously considered, indicating a lack of rational choice. However, where new work opportunities were found they were likely to be of a similar or lower occupational status.

This research has illustrated that supportive relationships within the workplace are fundamental to confirming or disconfirming occupational choice in regard to the development of self-efficacy, maintenance of occupational goals and confirmation of outcome expectation. Where individuals are unable to align self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectation with interest and occupational status perceptions, they will change their occupational choice. This is not currently well developed in either Circumscription and

Compromise or Social Cognitive Career Theory for application to occupational decision making in the hospitality VET context. It is suggested that to better address the process of occupational decision making in hospitality VET students, a consolidated model combining Circumscription and Compromise (Gottfredson, 1981) and Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) be utilised. The following chapter draws a conclusion to this thesis

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7 Conclusion

The broad aim of this thesis was to consolidate two extant career decision-making theories to better explain the occupational decision-making process of students undertaking hospitality VET courses. The results derived from this research are of value to both theory and practice for a range of reasons. Firstly, this research has identified that Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory can generate a greater level of insight into the contemporary practice of utilising VET courses as occupational decision-making mechanisms, rather than each theory individually. Theory of Circumscription and Compromise provides a developmental picture of how people come to make a decision to enter a hospitality occupation, but has limited utility beyond that initial occupational choice. However, Social Cognitive Career Theory provides insight into how initial occupations are assessed for suitability during early career exposure to occupations and workplaces. The elongated process of occupational decision making during the hospitality VET course necessarily requires the consolidation of these two theories to adequately examine this contemporary occupational decision-making phenomenon.

Secondly, results from this research support existing theory in that whilst background factors such as social class and interest have an important impact on choosing occupations, the „zone of acceptable alternatives' can be narrowed to such a degree for some individuals that rational choice is substantially curtailed. This then leads to a reliance on opportunism and a sense of plausibility rather than goal setting and outcome expectation. This is particularly so in regard to occupational choice where the initial hospitality occupational choice is abandoned. In such cases, individuals may narrow their occupational options to roles of lower occupational status. As identified, this has policy implications for the delivery of VET courses in schools

in regard to expanding opportunities for realistic job previews and exposure to broader occupational opportunity.

Thirdly, the role of supportive workplace relationships in early career as a support for the ongoing development of self-efficacy is identified as an important factor for those individuals maintaining an occupation in hospitality. Again, this has practical implications for the hospitality sector. Exposure to an unsupportive workplace during the hospitality VET course may reduce an individual's inclination to continue into a hospitality occupation post schooling, thus reducing the labour available to the sector even before potential employees have entered the workforce.

Overall, this research has identified that a consolidated model linking the Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive Career Theory provides a more powerful examination of the developmental journey of individuals when making an occupational decision in late adolescence, and the social cognitive responses to early career experiences of hospitality VET students in regional economies. Future challenges exist for both education policy makers and the hospitality sector to provide a greater range of support mechanisms that enhance opportunities for rational decision making, and to recognise the value of delivering more supportive workplace experiences to hospitality employees, particularly in early career.

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Appendices

Administration Documents

Appendix A1. Teacher Correspondence

Name

Address

27th October, 2006

Dear {VET TEACHER},

Re: Doctoral Research Program

I wish to invite your Hospitality VET students to take part in a longitudinal study into the development of career decisions and early career experiences of hospitality students as part of my doctoral thesis at the University of Tasmania's School of Management.

My thesis will be based on a longitudinal exploratory research program investigating the development of career choices and expectations of students undertaking Hospitality VET courses, changes to those expectations over time and how any differential between expectations and actual early career experiences are dealt with.

The research program will comprise of individual in-depth interviews and will be conducted at three separate intervals. The first interview will occur at the beginning of the students' VET course, another toward the end of training, and the final interview will be conducted with those entering the hospitality workforce as well as those who choose an alternative career path. For ease and convenience for students, it is requested that the first two interviews be conducted at the school at a suitable time for the students as well as yourself.

A consent form for participants and their parents/guardians and an information sheet is attached for your information. I would be happy to speak with you and/or the school principal should you need any further information.

The interviews will be subject to audio recording but all identifying material will be removed once research findings are compiled, and all data will be stored at the University of Tasmania as per University protocol.

Please be advised that this research program has been passed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, but if you should have any questions regarding the program, do not hesitate to contact me on 0408 254 225 or my supervisor, Dallas Hanson, at the University of Tasmania on 6226 7686.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or a complaint to make regarding the manner in which this project is conducted, please feel free to contact the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, Marilyn Pugsley, on 6226 7479.

It would be appreciated if you could accommodate a brief meeting with the students to allow me to explain the research program and to answer any questions that they or you may have. At this meeting I will distribute information sheets and consent forms for students, and will request that students aged under 18 take home a parental information sheet. I will collect the completed consent forms prior to the interview process commencing.

I look forward to speaking with you further on this matter soon.

Kind regards,

Terri Simpkin
PhD Candidate
University of Tasmania

Appendix A2. Student Information Sheet

Career decision making and early career experiences of students undertaking vocational education and training in hospitality

Terri Simpkin: PhD Candidate, University of Tasmania

Conducted under the supervision of Dr Dallas Hanson and Dr Denise Faifua.

Dear Hospitality VET student,

You are invited to participate in a study that involves finding out how you have come to decide on a career in the hospitality industry and your expectations of working in a hospitality environment. The study is being conducted as part of my Ph D study at the University of Tasmania's School of Management, under the supervision of Dr Dallas Hanson and Dr Denise Faifua. This study is important as it aims to determine the factors that influence people to make the career decisions they do and how training and work experiences may change their career aspirations. Findings from this research will inform the way in which hospitality careers are promoted, how training is delivered and how industry players can encourage people to stay in the industry.

Why am I requesting your input?

Your opinions and expectations of a career/job in the hospitality industry will help paint a picture of why people choose to work in hospitality, what VET students expect from working in hospitality and why they expect it. This information will then help me to write a thesis or report that identifies how people develop expectations about working in the hospitality industry and how they may change once in the industry.

Why does participating in this study involve?

You will be invited to participate in an individual interview with me. The interview will be held at your school and last approximately 30 minutes. At the outset, you will be asked to complete a short paper-based questionnaire seeking information on where you have lived, and the occupational background of your family members. The interview questions will focus on why you came to decide on hospitality as a career, what or who has had an influence on your decisions (e.g. the media, family) and what your expectations of a career in hospitality are.

Because this study aims to understand how people's expectations about working in hospitality may change over time, I would also like to speak with you on an individual basis on two further occasions: toward the end of your VET course, and again once you have left school to work. These two interviews will be held at a location convenient to you, and will last around 30 minutes each. The first of these two interviews will ask questions on whether or not your opinion of a career in hospitality has changed through your training and the

reasons for that. The second will focus on your experiences of the workplace and how these may have changed or enhanced your desire to work in the hospitality industry.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Although I will know you names, your identity will not be disclosed in my Ph D thesis, or in any other publications arising out of the study. Any contribution you make will be de-identified, and if you are quoted in any way, a pseudonym will be used, and any potentially identifying data will be generalised in its presentation. If you feel that your answers are personal and/or sensitive, let me know, and explain how you would like the information to be treated or reported. I will not disclose your identity as a participant in the study.

Please note that the interviews will be audio taped, but the tapes will be held securely at the School of Management in a locked filing cabinet, and any other data will be stored on a password protected computer system for a period of five years before being destroyed. If you wish to check or modify what you said at any of the interviews, please contact me and I can arrange for this.

Any contact information you provide (e.g. mobile telephone number) will only be used to contact you in regard to the study which will follow your path through your course and into the workforce. Once your involvement has been completed your contact details will be destroyed.

Voluntariness and withdrawal

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary; it is not part of your VET studies, and a decision not to participate will not prejudice those studies. Your consent to participate is evidenced by signing a consent form. If you are under 18 years of age, your parent/guardian will also have to sign the consent form after having read the parental information sheet. Even if you agree to participate, you don't have to answer any questions if you don't want to, and you can withdraw from the study at any time, even if you participated in one or two interviews, you can decide not to proceed. If you withdraw, any data you provided will be deleted unless you direct otherwise.

Who can I contact for further information?

Should you require any further information regarding the project, please feel free to contact Dr Dallas Hanson at the University of Tasmania on 6226 7686. If you would like to receive a summary of the research findings once the study is complete, please contact me (my email details are below).

What if I have a concern or complaint?

This research has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or a complaint to make regarding the manner in which this project is conducted, please feel free to contact the Executive Officer of the Network, Marilyn Pugsley, on 6226 7479.

Please find attached a consent form. If you agree to take part, please ensure that you and your parent (if you are under 18) sign the consent form, and return it to me before commencement of the research activity. I will collect them from you in class. You will receive a copy for your own information.

Many thanks for your cooperation and consideration.

Kind regards,

Terri Simpkin
PhD Candidate
University of Tasmania
[email] terri.simpkin@bigpond.com

Appendix A3. Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Career decision making and early career experiences of students undertaking vocational education and training in hospitality

Terri Simpkin: PhD Candidate, University of Tasmania

Conducted under the supervision of Dr Dallas Hanson and Dr Denise Faifua.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your son/daughter is invited to participate in a study that involves finding out how they have come to decide on a career in the hospitality industry and their expectations of working in a hospitality environment. The study is being conducted as part of my PhD study at the University of Tasmania's School of Management, under the supervision of Dr Dallas Hanson and Dr Denise Faifua. Your son's/daughter's VET teacher has agreed for students in the VET class to participate in this study. I have not requested or secured your identity or contact details.

This study is important as it aims to determine the factors that influence people to make the career decisions they do and how training and work experiences may change their career aspirations. Findings from this research will inform the way in which hospitality careers are promoted, how training is delivered and how industry players can encourage people to stay in the industry.

Why am I requesting your son's/daughter's input?

Their opinions and expectations of a career/job in the hospitality industry will help paint a picture of why people choose to work in hospitality, what VET students expect from working in hospitality and why they expect it. This information will then help me to write a thesis or report that identifies how people develop expectations about working in the hospitality industry and how they may change once in the industry.

What does participating in this study involve?

Individual interviews

Your son/daughter will be invited to participate in an individual interview with me. The interview will be held at their school and last approximately 30 minutes. At the outset, your son/daughter will be asked to complete a short paper-based questionnaire seeking information on where they have lived, and the occupational background of their family members. The questions in the interview will focus on why they came to decide on hospitality as a career, what or who has had an influence on their decisions (e.g. the media, family) and what their expectations of a career in hospitality are.

Because this study aims to understand how people's expectations about working in hospitality may change over time, I would also like to speak with your son/daughter on an individual basis on two further occasions: toward the end of their VET course, and again once they have left school to work. These two interviews will be held at a location convenient to them and will last around 30 minutes each. The first of these two interviews will ask questions on whether or not their opinion of a career in hospitality has changed through training and the reasons for that. The second will focus on experiences of the workplace and how these may have changed or enhanced the desire to work in the hospitality industry.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Although I will know individuals' names, you and your son's/daughter's identity will not be disclosed in my PhD thesis, or in any other publications arising out of the study. Any contribution made will be de-identified, and if quotes are used in any way, a pseudonym will be used, and any potentially identifying data will be generalised in its presentation. If it is felt that answers are personal and/or sensitive, participants will have an opportunity to let me know and explain how you would like the information to be treated or reported. I will not disclose any individual's identity as a participant in the study.

Please note that the interviews will be audio taped, but the tapes will be held securely at the School of Management in a locked filing cabinet, and any other data will be stored on a password protected computer system, for a period of five years before being destroyed. If participants wish to check or modify what was said at any of the interviews, they are able to contact me and I can arrange for this.

Any contact information provided (e.g. mobile telephone number) will only be used to contact you in regard to the study which will follow the path through the VET course and into the workforce. Once the participant's involvement has been completed all contact details will be destroyed.

Voluntariness and withdrawal

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; it is not part of your son's/daughter's VET studies, and a decision not to participate will not prejudice those studies. Consent to participate is evidenced by signing a consent form. If participants are under 18 years of age, as a parent/guardian you are requested to sign the consent form after having read this information sheet.

Even if your son/daughter agrees to participate, they don't have to answer any questions if they don't want to, and they can withdraw from the study at any time throughout the course of the program. If your son/daughter withdraws, any data you provided will be deleted unless you direct otherwise.

Who can you contact for further information?

Should you require any further information regarding the project, please feel free to contact Dr Dallas Hanson at the University of Tasmania on 6226 7686. If you would like to receive a

summary of the research findings once the study is complete, please contact me (my email details are below).

What if you have a concern or complaint?

This research has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have any concerns of an ethical nature or a complaint to make regarding the manner in which this project is conducted, please feel free to contact the Executive Officer of the Network, Marilyn Pugsley, on 6226 7479.

Please find attached a consent form. If you agree for your son/daughter to take part, please ensure that you and your son/daughter sign the consent form and return it to me before commencement of the research activity. I will collect them in class. You will receive a copy for your own information.

Many thanks for your cooperation and consideration.

Kind regards,

Terri Simpkin
PhD Candidate
University of Tasmania
[email] terri.simpkin@bigpond.com

Appendix A4. Permission Form

Career decision making and early career experiences of students undertaking vocational education and training in hospitality

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As part of this research project, I am required to gain your consent to participate in a series of individual interviews.

If you give consent, please complete the information below and return to me.

1 I have read and understood the ‚information sheet' for this study.
2 The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3 I understand that the study involves participating in up to three audio taped 30 minute individual interviews on my experiences of hospitality training and career decisions on separate occasions, the second and third of these being, respectively, at the end of my VET course and once I am working.
4 I understand that all data will be securely stored for a period of five years at the University of Tasmania before being destroyed.
5 I understand that my contact details will need to be provided to facilitate follow up contact during the study.
6 I understand that all identifiable research data will be treated as confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final thesis or other research output from the study.
7 All questions relating to the process have been answered to my satisfaction.
8 I agree to participate, and understand that I can decline to answer any question, and that I may withdraw my consent at any time.
9 I understand that I may hear information from other focus group participants and I undertake that this information will not be discussed or shared with individuals outside of the focus group environment.

Name of participant (please print)_____

Signature of participant_____ Date_____

Statement by parent/guardian:

I have read the parent/guardian information sheet and agree for my child to participate in this study as outlined in the information sheet:

Name of parent/guardian (please print)_____

Signature of parent/guardian _____ Date_____

Statement by the investigator:

I have explained this project and implications regarding participation in it to the volunteer participant and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implication of participation.

Name of investigator_____

Signature of investigator_____ Date_____

Question Development & Response Forms

Appendix M1. Proposed Interview Questions

<u>Proposed</u> First Interview Question	**Indications/Operationalisation**	**Data/Theory Interface**
Why did you choose hospitality over other careers available to you?	What factors have impacted on or moulded the individual's career choices? • Family background (parent/sibling influence/sexual stereotypes etc.)	**Gottfredson & Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)** Circumscription of alternatives Primary Socialisation theory Berger & Luckmann Socioeconomic factors
	• Media	Social/cultural factors (SCCT) Berger & Luckmann (social construction of reality)
	• Personal experience	Social/cultural factors (SCCT)
	• School information	Social/cultural factors (SCCT) Secondary socialisation Berger & Luckmann
	• Interests	Gottfredson (last stage in compromise and circumscription model)/Super/SCCT
	• Abilities	SCCT self-efficacy

At what age did you decide that hospitality was the career for you?	At what point in the individual's life did they make this choice? Relate to Gottfredson's career consideration progression theory.	**Gottfredson**
What other choices did you consider? Why did you decide against those choices?	Evidence of circumscription and compromise over time. What were the reasons for/factors in divesting original career choices? • Family influence • Interest • Self-efficacy • Social acceptance/status	**Gottfredson & SCCT** • How did they come to determine a "zone of acceptable alternatives"
On what information did you base your decision to take up employment in the hospitality industry? Where did this information come from?	What information influenced the career choice and what was the source? • School • Media • Personal experience • Friends and family Is the information deemed to be accurate or a reliable source? Is it a perpetuation of an idealised/inaccurate understanding? How does this information contribute to the socially constructed view of the vocation/industry?	**Gottfredson & SCCT**

What do your family/friends think about you choosing a career in hospitality? What do you think other people think of hospitality work/workers? What are your expectations of a hospitality career?	Impact of the family and significant others in the career decision-making process. Specifically aiming to determine the social construction of the status of hospitality in the view of the individual. This can be monitored over time for changes (are expectations met or disappointed).	**Gottfredson & SCCT** • Social status? • The role of supportive/ non-supportive/ indifferent significant others
Tell me about the conditions you will be working under in the hospitality enterprise? Hours? Working with customers? Type of work available? Pay? Training? Work/Life balance?	Is the constructed „idea' of the industry consistent with the literature? (How) have the facts of working in the industry been „modified' to suit the abilities/interests of the individual to make it more attractive/palatable/socially acceptable?	**SCCT** • Self-efficacy (will I be able to cope with these demands?) • Interaction between goals, self-efficacy and outcome expectations **Gottfredson** • Interests/ability as a precursor to career choice

How have you come to know this? Work? School? VET? Family? What are your career aspirations? How will you get there? How long do you think this will take? Do you think you will need to undertake further training?	Are the sources of info reliable? Socially constructed outside of the industry „fact'? Predictor of future progression. Reference for later questioning re: accuracy of expectation/own ability/career choice attractiveness.	**SCCT** • Goals and outcome expectations?
What do you think you might do if you find you don't like working in hospitality?		**SCCT** • The role of **sense-making** in career decision making • „Making sense' of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectations • Disconfirmation of expectation and further career decision making

<u>Proposed</u> Second Interview Question	**Indications/Operationalisation**	**Data/Theory Interface**
Given that you have now nearly completed your VET course in hospitality, has your career choice changed at all? Why? In what ways? Why not?	Looking for evidence of a confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations of a career in the hospitality industry. Is it still an attractive option? If not, why? • Status/social acceptance? • Goal/outcome expectation confluence/divergence? How have expectations changed or been modified in response to new or more information/experiences?	**SCCT** • Evidence of the dynamism of the relationship between goals/outcome expectation and self efficacy
Do you think the information on which you based your career decision was accurate? If not, why? What do you think was inaccurate? How has this affected your opinion of a career in hospitality?	What information influenced the career choice and was it deemed to be accurate/inaccurate? • School • Media • Personal experience • Friends and family Was the information deemed to be accurate or a reliable source? Was it a perpetuation of an idealised/inaccurate understanding? How has this contributed to the socially constructed view of the vocation/industry? Has the individual modified expectations in line with new information?	**SCCT** • The role of sense-making in the continuing appraisal of the career choice
What do you think about pursuing a career in hospitality now? Has your opinion of how other people view hospitality workers changed? If so, how? Has the opinion of your family/significant others changed regarding your career choice?	Impact of the learning and experience in the career decision-making process. Specifically aiming to determine the social construction of the status of hospitality in the view of the individual. This can be monitored over time for changes.	**SCCT** • Social status? • The role of supportive/non-supportive/indifferent significant others (family)

Has your understanding of the conditions of work in hospitality changed? Hours? Working with customers? Type of work available? Pay? Training? Work/Life balance? If so, how? Has your experience and learning in the VET program changed your career aspirations/goals? If so, how? Now do you think you will need to undertake further training? How would you rate your level of self-efficacy?	Has more learning/experience brought a greater awareness of hospitality working conditions? Is it consistent with the literature? Have the facts of working conditions in the industry been „modified' to suit the abilities/interests of the individual to make it more attractive/palatable/socially acceptable? Or has it been modified to make it more unattractive/unpalatable/socially unacceptable? Predictor of future progression. Reference for later questioning re: accuracy of expectation/own ability/career choice attractiveness. What is the level of self-efficacy? How does this impact on the career choice?	**SCCT** • Self-efficacy (will I be able to cope with these demands?) • Interaction between goals, self-efficacy and outcome expectations **Gottfredson** • Interests/ability as a precursor to career choice **SCCT** • Goals and outcome expectations? • Self-efficacy
What do you think you might do now if you find you don't like working in hospitality? Or What other career choices might you explore now that a career in hospitality has been decided against?	Looking for an anticipation of future outcome (outcome expectation).	**SCCT** • The role of **sense-making** in career decision making • „Making sense' of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectations • Disconfirmation of expectation and further career decision making

		Gottfredson • How are alternatives determined? Do they come from the "zone of acceptable alternatives"?

	<u>Proposed</u> Third Interview Question	**Indications/Operationalisation**	**Data/Theory Interface**
"Stayers"	Are you still working in the hospitality industry? If so, what is it that you find attractive/rewarding/compelling you to stay?	Looking for evidence of a confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations of a career in the hospitality industry. Is it still an attractive option? If not, why? • Status/social acceptance • Goal/outcome expectation confluence/divergence? • Working conditions • Interest/Self-efficacy – changes in opinion/awareness • The work itself (e.g. working with people) How have expectations changed or been modified in response to new or more information/experiences? Have previous expectations been replaced with new expectations or an awareness/acceptance of a „different' reality?	**SCCT** • Evidence of the dynamism of the relationship between goals/outcome expectation and self-efficacy
"Movers"	If not, why? What was it that made you leave? Were your expectations unmet? Why do you think your expectations may not have been met? How did your family react to your decision to exit the industry?		

Both	Do you think the information on which you based your career decision was accurate? If not, why? What do you think was inaccurate? How has this affected your opinion of a career in hospitality?	What information influenced the career choice and was it deemed to be accurate/inaccurate? • School • Media • Personal experience • Friends and family Was the information deemed to be accurate or a reliable source? Was it a perpetuation of an idealised/inaccurate understanding? How has this contributed to the socially constructed view of the vocation/industry? Has the individual modified expectations in line with new information?	**SCCT** • The role of sense-making in the continuing appraisal of the career choice
"Stayers"	Do you think you will continue to work in the hospitality industry? If so, what is it that attracts you to the industry? Has your opinion of how other people view hospitality workers changed? If so, how? Has the opinion of your family/significant others changed regarding your career choice?	Impact of the workplace experience in the career decision-making process. Has experience provided the individual with a fortification of their career choice or not? What factors make a person stay in the industry? Specifically aiming to determine the social construction of the status of hospitality in the view of the individual. Changes over the course of the research should be noted.	**SCCT** • Social status? • Attractiveness of the industry – what is it? • The role of supportive/non-supportive/indifferent significant others (family)

Both	Has your understanding of the conditions of work in hospitality changed? Hours? Working with customers? Type of work available? Pay? Training? Work/Life balance? If so, how?	Has greater workplace experience brought a greater awareness of hospitality working conditions? Is it consistent with the literature? Have the facts of working conditions in the industry been „modified' to suit the abilities/interests of the individual to make it more attractive/palatable/socially acceptable? Or has it been modified to make it more unattractive/unpalatable/socially unacceptable?	**SCCT** • Self-efficacy (will I be able to cope with these demands?) • Interaction between goals, self-efficacy and outcome expectations **Gottfredson** • Interests/ability as a precursor to career choice **SCCT** • Goals and outcome expectations? • Self-efficacy
"Stayers"	Have your work experiences changed your career aspirations/goals? If so, how? Do you think you will need to undertake further training? How would you rate your level of self-efficacy, now?	Have other vocational pathways been considered inside the industry that were not considered prior to working? Predictor of future progression. Reference to previous questioning re: accuracy of expectation/own ability/career choice attractiveness. Has the level of self-efficacy changed? How does this impact on the career choice?	

	What do you think you might do now if you find you don't like working in hospitality?	Looking for an anticipation of future outcome. (outcome expectation)	**SCCT** • The role of **sense-making in career** decision making • „Making sense' of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectations • Disconfirmation of expectation and further career decision making **Gottfredson** • How are alternatives determined? Do they come from the "zone of acceptable alternatives"? • **Sense-making** in career decision making • „Making sense' of self-efficacy, goals and outcome expectations • Disconfirmation o**f** expectation and further career decision making
"Movers"	What other career choices might you explore now that a career in hospitality has been decided against?		**Gottfredson** • How are alternatives determined? Do they come from the "zone of acceptable alternatives"?

Appendix M2. Questionnaire Template

Questionnaire – VET in Schools

-please complete as best you can without discussion with anyone else-
Your responses will help me to build a picture of Hospitality VET Students in Tasmania

Your Name (this will be kept confidential)		**Your Age**	**Your Gender** (please circle one) M F	**Year of School** (please circle one) 11 12
Your Contact Details	Home Telephone Number	Mobile Telephone Number	Email Address	
Where were you born?				
What is your identified cultural background? (e.g. Australian, Italian, Chinese, Anglo Saxon)				

		Not applicable	**Home Duties**	**Does not work**	**Paid/unpaid employment**
What jobs do your family do? (e.g. chef, nurse, engineer, salesperson)	**Mother**				
	Father				
	Brother/s				
	Sister/s				
	Step Parent/s				

		Yes	**No**	**Why or why not?**

Do you think they are good jobs? (your opinion will be kept confidential)	**Mother**			
	Father			
	Brother/s			
	Sister/s			
	Step Parent/s			

In which suburbs have you lived?	**Suburb**	**For how long?** (please ensure you include your present place of residence)
		At present

Thank you for your time.
The responses you have given may be discussed further in the personal interview/s.
Your name **will not** be included in any research publication nor made available to any other third party.

Appendix M3. Interview Questions

Background/expectations of early entrants to the hospitality industry - VET in hospitality

Final Questions – 1st Interview

1. Why did you choose hospitality over other work available to you?
2. When did you decide that you wanted a job in hospitality?
3. Were there any other jobs you wanted to do before you chose <hospitality job>? What other jobs did you consider?
4. Why did you decide against those/that job/s?
5. What do your family/friends think about you choosing to work in hospitality?
6. What information did you use to make your decision to take up a job in the hospitality industry?
7. Where did this information come from?
8. Tell me about the conditions you will be working under in the hospitality enterprise? (Prompts)
    - Hours?
    - Working with customers?
    - Type of work available?
    - Pay?
    - Training?
    - Work /Life balance?
9. How have you come to know about these things? Work? School? VET? Family?
10. What are your career aspirations? What do you think you'll need to do to get that job? How long do you think this will take?
11. Do you think you will need to undertake further training?
12. What do you think you might do if you find you don't like working in hospitality?
13. Have you had any work experience in hospitality?

Questionnaire – Follow-up questions.

1. Tell me about the work your parents do. Do you think they are good jobs? If I were to ask you to put a mark on a line between what you think is the best job you can think of and the worst, where would your parent's jobs sit? Where do you think <hospitality job> sits on this line?
2. Tell me about the work your sisters/brothers do? Do you think they are good job? Why/Why not?

Second Interview		
Name:	***College:***	***ID Code:***

Interview Question	Response Notes
Given that you have now nearly completed your VET course in hospitality, has your job choice changed at all? If so, how? Do you still think you want to work in <hospitality job>? Why/why not? Tell me about the work placements you did during your VET course. Where did you go? What did you do there? Did the work placements and the VET program change your job goals at all? What do your family/friends think of you becoming a <occupation name>? Has their opinion of work in hospitality changed at all?	
Last time you told me about the information you used to choose to do <hospitality job> do you think the information on which you based your career decision was accurate/right?	

If not, why? What do you think was different/wrong/inaccurate? Has this affected your opinion of working in <hospitality job>? If so, how? What information would you have liked to have had (if any)?	
Last time we spoke about where <hospitality job> sits on a line between the best and worst jobs. Where would you put it now that you've had some experience in doing the work? *(Phone I'view. Rate from 1 (worst) and 10 (best))*	
Has your understanding of the conditions of work in hospitality changed at all? *(prompts)* Hours? Working with customers? Type of work available? Pay? Training? Work/Life balance? If so, how? Now do you think you will need to do further training?	
How supportive of your decision to go into <hospitality job> were the people you worked with during your work placements? What did they tell you about working in this industry?	

So let's say you finish school and go into <hospitality job> what do you think you might do if you find you don't like it? What's your ‚fall back' position? *Or* What other jobs might you consider now that a hospitality job has been decided against?	
How many books do you have in your house?	
What will your TCE score be, do you think?	
How confident you are that you'll go into <hospitality/other job> and be a professional <occupation name>. On a scale of 1 (not very confident) to 10 (absolutely confident) how confident are you that you'll do this job?	

Third Interview		
Name:	***College:***	***ID Code:***
	Interview Question	**Response Notes**
Both	Are you still working in the hospitality industry in <hospitality job>?	
"Stayers"	If so, what is it that you like most about it to make you to stay in the job?	
"Movers"	If not, why? What was it that made you leave? Was the job not what you expected? Why do you think your expectations may not have been met? How did your family react to your decision to leave <hospitality job>?	

Both	Do you think the information on which you based your decision to go into <hospitality occupation> was right/accurate? If not, why? What do you think was wrong/inaccurate? How has this affected your opinion of <hospitality job> /hospitality industry? Do you think the VET program gave you enough information about hospitality work? If not, why? What information would you have liked to have had?	
	Do you think you will continue to work in <hospitality job> /the hospitality industry? If so, what is it that attracts you to the industry? If that changed would you continue to work as a <hospitality job>? Or in hospitality in general? Has your opinion of how other people view hospitality workers changed? If so, how? Has the opinion of your family and friends changed regarding your choice to work in hospitality?	

Both	Has your understanding of the conditions of work in hospitality changed? (prompts) Hours? Working with customers? Type of work available? Pay? Training? Work/Life balance? If so, how?	
"Stayers"	Have your work experiences changed what you'd like to do as a job in the future? If so, how? Do you think you will need to undertake further training? What do you think you might do if you find you don't like working in hospitality? Do you have a „fall back' plan?	

"Movers"	What will you do now that you've decided that <hospitality job>/hospitality isn't for you?	
Both	Remember last time we spoke about where you thought <hospitality job> sat between the best job and the worst job. If I were to ask you to rate <current job/hospitality job> on a scale from 1 (worst) to 10 (best), where would you rate it?	
	Last time we also spoke about your confidence in doing your chosen job. If you were to rate your confidence in achieving your job goals, where would you rate it between 1 (not confident) and 10 (absolutely confident)?	
	Have you heard the term „social class'? (explain if „no') How would you rate your social class? (*Prompt* upper, working, middle, lower)	

Both	Do you think <hospitality job> is seen as being at the upper, lower or middle class? Why is that?	
"Movers"	Do you think <new job choice> is seen as being at the upper, lower or middle class? Why is that?	

Appendix M4. Thematic Investigation Template – Initial manual data interrogation.

ID Code:	
Occupational aspiration	
Rationale (interest/outcome expectation)	
Previous occupational goals/age	
Reason for abandonment	
Parental support	
Familial/associate influence (+/-)	
Understanding of industry conditions	None Moderate Good Excellent
Further training	
Other options	
Status indications	
Notes/Other emergent themes	

Career aspiration change?	
Rationale	
Experiences at work/work-placement (self-efficacy)	
Workplace influences	
Status indications	
Other changes	
Notes/Other emergent themes	
Notes to self	

Data Analysis

Appendix M5. NVivo® Tree Nodes

Type	Name	Memo Link	Sources
Tree Node	Career at end of training - Institutional-forces		5
Tree Node	Career Rationale		39
	Tree Node	Being in charge	
	Tree Node	Career Rationale	
	Tree Node	Career Rationale Parent Suggestion	
	Tree Node	Current work	
	Tree Node	Didn't like anything else	
	Tree Node	Easier than other options	
	Tree Node	Fun or excitement	
	Tree Node	Growing industry	
	Tree Node	Love cooking	
	Tree Node	Not good at anything else	
	Tree Node	Not hospitality	
	Tree Node	People (working-talking with)	
	Tree Node	Run own business	
	Tree Node	Travel	
	Tree Node	Undecided or Don't know	
	Tree Node	Vocational Task orientation	
Tree Node	Confidence rating (out of 10) in reaching career goal interviews 2 & 3		27
	Tree Node	Second Interview	
	Tree Node	Third Interview	
Tree Node	End of training outcome - working in hospitality		27
	Tree Node	End of training outcome - not working in hospitality	
	Tree Node	Rationale for electing hospitality post training	
Tree Node	End of training outcome - in training for hospitality occupation		4
Tree Node	Fall back plan		62
	Tree Node	'Fall back plan' - hospitality	
	Tree Node	'Fall back plan' - not hospitality	
	Tree Node	No 'fall back plan'	
	Tree Node	Not sure - can't decide	
	Tree Node	Other training	
Tree Node	Family connections		32
Tree Node	Information search		40
	Tree Node	Don’t know	
	Tree Node	Experience of the industry as a customer or employee	
	Tree Node	Family & social connections	
	Tree Node	Internet	
	Tree Node	None	

Type	Name	Memo Link	Sources
	Tree Node	Other (e.g. brochures or media)	
	Tree Node	School	
		Tree Node	Careers adviser or teacher
		Tree Node	High school course
		Tree Node	Information day or seminar
		Tree Node	Work placement (school)
Tree Node	Other options at first interview		32
Tree Node	Parental Support		61
	Tree Node	Happy to support	
	Tree Node	Negative reaction	
	Tree Node	No overt engagement	
Tree Node	People as part of the workplace attraction		45
	Tree Node	Negative	
	Tree Node	Neutral	
	Tree Node	Positive	
Tree Node	Pre-tertiaries		38
	Tree Node	No pre-tertiaries	
	Tree Node	Pre-tertiary - not sure	
	Tree Node	Pre-tertiary with intent to pursue Uni	
	Tree Node	Pre-tertiary without intent to pursue Uni	
Tree Node	Rationale for occupational choice - miscellaneous comments		1
Tree Node	Rationale for occupational choice - other occupation		3
Tree Node	Self-efficacy comments		22
	Tree Node	Learning	
	Tree Node	People - General	
	Tree Node	Support from colleagues	
Tree Node	Social class comments - final i'view		20
	Tree Node	Establishment status	
	Tree Node	Job role	
	Tree Node	Perception of hospitality work status	
		Tree Node	Don’t' know
		Tree Node	Higher than own perceived class perception
		Tree Node	Lower
		Tree Node	Lower than own class perception
		Tree Node	Middle
		Tree Node	Upper
		Tree Node	Working
	Tree Node	Perception of other occupational choice	
	Tree Node	Perception of own social status	

Type	Name	Memo Link	Sources
		Tree Node	Don't know
		Tree Node	Lower
		Tree Node	Middle
		Tree Node	Upper
		Tree Node	Working
Tree Node	Social network support		19
Tree Node	Time Of Decision		29
	Tree Node	Over two years ago	
	Tree Node	Thirteen months and 24 months	
	Tree Node	Within last 12 months	
Tree Node	Understanding of working conditions		46
	Tree Node	Busy stressful work	
	Tree Node	Easy work and/or hours	
	Tree Node	Emotional labour	
	Tree Node	Good hours	
	Tree Node	Good pay	
	Tree Node	Good working conditions	
	Tree Node	Long hours	
	Tree Node	Low pay	
	Tree Node	Pay rate expectation	
	Tree Node	Poor employment practices	
	Tree Node	Split shifts	
	Tree Node	Tedious work	
	Tree Node	Tiring work	
Tree Node	Vocational Tasks as motivator - misc comments		3

Appendix M6. NVivo® Free Nodes

Type	Name	Memo Link	Sources	References
Free Node	Alternative options - pre training		33	66
Free Node	Career choice at end of course - hospitality		41	225
Free Node	Comments made by people in the work placement workplace		27	43
Free Node	Confidence rating (out of 10) in reaching career goal interviews 2 & 3		27	78
Free Node	Current work experience		39	69
Free Node	Description of work placements - negative		15	36
Free Node	Description of work placements - positive		25	75
Free Node	Disappointment re skills development		11	16
Free Node	End of training reflections - new or surprises		24	97
Free Node	Fall back plan rationale		55	99
Free Node	Father's occupation - student opinion		36	67
Free Node	Further training		58	122
Free Node	Further training - unknown		36	45
Free Node	Mum's occupation - student opinion		37	76
Free Node	Previous choices - abandoned		29	58
Free Node	Rating at beginning of training		32	52
Free Node	Rating at end of training		35	94
Free Node	Rationale for decreased perception of working in the hospitality environment		7	12
Free Node	Rationale for improved perception of hospitality work		5	11
Free Node	Sex roles		3	5
Free Node	Significant other occupation rating		20	29
Free Node	Skills deficiency no barrier to self efficacy		6	8
Free Node	Work/life balance comments		30	44

Appendix Table AF1. Student Occupational Status Rating – Parental Occupation

	Father's Occupation	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference	Mother's Occupation	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference
LC1	Maintenance/cleaner	4.2	18.3	-14.1	Scallop Splitter (seasonal)	1	12.4	-11.4
LC2	Construction	44.8	35.9	8.9	Home Duties			
LC3	Does not work				Teacher's Aid/Clerk	28.1	31.6	-3.5
LC4	Hair/Make Up artist	81.2	32.8	48.4	Branch Manager Bank	73.9	63.2	10.7
LC5	Mechanic (Fire Brigade)	91.0	33	58.0	Office work (secretary)	82.1	34.9	47.2
SP1	Miner	27.0	7.6	19.4	Nurse	47.3	75.3	-28.0
HC1	Plumber	21.6	40.4	-18.8	Egg Collector	52.3	0	52.3
HC2	Builder (stepfather)*				Admin (Medicare)	17.6	32.2	-14.6
HC 3	Welder	30.2	31.3	-1.1	Post Office attendant	21.6	34.7	-13.1
HC4	Transport Driver*				Home Duties			
HC5	Shop Asst. (wood yard)	15.8	27.4	-11.6	Teacher's Aid	30	31.6	-1.6
HC6	Mechanic	66.4	33	33.4	Canteen Manager	77.6	39.6	38.0
HC7	Does not work				Does not work			
HC8	Butcher	52.3	24.1	28.2	Retail (Woolworths)	64.4	27.4	37.0
RC1	Does not work				Home Duties			
RC2	Project Mgr	82.1	58.9	23.2	Personal Asst (RBF)	33.9	34.9	-1.0
RC3	Mechanic	39.8	33	6.8	Nurse (retraining)	50.8	75.3	-24.5
RC4	Chef	13.8	32.2	-18.4	n/a			
RC5	Butcher/Truck driver	25.7	52.3	-26.6	Cleaner/Hairdresser	21.6	32.8	-11.2
RC6	Home duties				Car rental asst. (Thrifty)	46.7	31.8	14.9
RC7	Photographer	89.5	63	26.5	Relief teacher	55.2	84.5	-29.3
RC8	n/a				Dental nurse/TAFE student	78.6	31.9	46.7
GYC1	Mechanic/bus driver*				Home Duties			
GYC2	Self employed	88.2	49.9	38.3	Clothing distributor	88.2	49.9	38.3
GYC3	Zinc Worker	70.9	26.2	44.7	Teacher's Aid	44.4	31.6	12.8
GYC4	T'leader TAFE (painting)	69.1	84.3	-15.2	District Nurse	67.3	75.3	-8.0

	Father's Occupation	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference	Mother's Occupation	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference
STM1	Nurse (nursing home)	48.8	75.3	-26.5	Nurse (nursing home)	48.8	75.3	-26.5
STM2	Construction	73.6	46	27.6	Receptionist	52.6	30.1	22.5
STM3	Bus Driver	14.6	27.2	-12.6	Medicare Officer	76.7	32.2	44.5
STM4	Electrician	39.0	42.8	-3.8	Nurse	28.8	75.3	-46.5
CC1	n/a				Tax Office worker	7.4	70	-62.6
CC2	Home duties				Hospital Aide/Admin.	49	25.9	23.1
CC3	Electrician	73.0	42.8	30.2	Retail (dry-cleaning)	24	27.4	-3.4
CC4	Tug Boat Skipper	74.0	74.8	-0.8	Special needs teacher	40	84.3	-44.3
CC5	Admin. Clerk	19.0	36.1	-17.1	Cleaner	24	18.3	5.7
CC6	Labourer	48.7	22.7	26.0	Seamstress	38.1	30	8.1
CC7	Storeman	11.9	19	-7.1	Home Duties			
HS1	Town Planner	40.1	74.8	-34.7	Book keeper	4.5	39.5	-35.0
HS2	Tourism Officer	53.6	46.7	6.9	Nurse	29.1	75.3	-46.2
HS3	Maintenance DoE	15.9	22.7	-6.8	Web technician DoE	15.9	54.6	-38.7
HS4	Builder (Own Company)	89.2	35.9	53.3	Home Duties			
HS5	Academic	69.9	95.7	-25.8	Academic	69.9	95.7	-25.8
SM1	Builder	54.5	35.9	18.6	Manager - Telstra	30.3	48.4	-18.1
SM2	Miner	13.5	7.6	5.9	Business Owner	80.8	40.5	40.3
HL1	Business Owner Joiner	52.3	39.5	12.8	Home Duties	79.1		79.1
HL2	n/a				Call Centre	44.4	27.4	17.0
HL3	Sales Representative (tyres)	45.8	27.4	18.4	Real Estate Agent	53.43	48.4	5.0
HL4	Master Cheese-maker	58.2	24.1	34.1	Fire fighter	52.74	41.2	11.5
HL5	Supervisor (Caterpillar)	84.8	49.9	34.9	Aged Care worker	92.75	35.5	57.3
HL6	Boilermaker leading hand	48.5	43.1	5.4	Aged Care worker	63.08	35.5	27.6
HL7	Police Officer	81.5	48.5	33.0	Teacher	77.03	84.5	-7.5
HL8	Miner	57.8	7.6	50.2	Does not work			

	Father's Occupation	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference	Mother's Occupation	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference
D1	Farmer	40.9	46.3	-5.4	Retail food worker (bakery)	50	27.4	22.6
D2	Home duties	39.2		39.2	Customer Manager (wildlife park)	56.96	48.4	8.6
D3	Orchard Manager	52.2	46.31	5.9	Transport Supervisor Red Cross	71.43	35.5	35.9
D4	Gardener - Council	51.3	17.1	34.2	Bar/Gaming Attendant	32.05	26.7	5.4
D5	Taxi Driver	47.4	32.2	15.2	Librarian (Part Time)	63	79.4	-16.4
D6	Painter	35.1	37.3	-2.2	Office work (secretary)	23.8	34.9	-11.1
D7	Carpet Weaver	23.8	8.5	15.3	Bank Teller (p/t)/vineyard pruner	59.52	35.5	24.0
D8	Farm Manager	72.7	46.3	26.4	Cleaner (ship)	11.51	18.3	-6.8
D9	Slaughterman	25.3	0	25.3	Kitchen Hand	97.59	19.5	78.1

* Estranged Father/Stepfather = no response provided.

Appendix Table AF2. Student Occupational Status Rating – Own Occupational Aspiration.

	Career Aspiration	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference	3rd I'view Rating	ANU4 Diff	1st v 3rd
LC1	Chef	49.3	32.1	17.2	100	67.9	50.7
LC2	Baker	44.8	24.1	20.7			
LC3	Chef	47.0	32.1	14.9	75	42.9	28.0
LC4	Hospitality Mgt	45.6	40.5	5.1			
LC5	Chef	46.5	32.1	14.4			
SP1	Hospitality Mgt	34.5	40.5	-6.0			
HC1	Hospitality Mgt	71.2	40.5	30.7	65	24.5	-6.2
HC2	Bar Attendant	83.2	26.7	56.5	50	23.3	-33.2
HC 3	Own Bar Nightclub						
HC4	Hospitality Mgt	50.0	40.5	9.5	60	19.5	10.0
HC5	Chef	53.8	32.1	21.7	80	47.9	26.2
HC6	Hospitality	41.3	36.4	4.9	75	38.6	33.7
HC7	Security	85.3	27.6	57.7			
HC8	Chef	61.7	32.1	29.6	45	12.9	-16.7
RC1	Chef						
RC2	Hospitality Mgt						
RC3	Chef						
RC4	Chef						
RC5	Hospitality Mgt						
RC6	Chef	91.4	32.1	59.3	75	42.9	-16.4
RC7	Chef	58.7	32.1	26.6	70	37.9	11.3
RC8	Chef	84.8	32.1	52.7	70	37.9	-14.8
G1	Wrestler						
G2	Cook/Pilot	69.1	32.1	37.0	65	32.9	-4.1
G3	Pastry Cook	68.5	24.1	44.4	75	50.9	6.5
G4	Chef	49.1	32.1	17.0	65	32.9	15.9
STM1	Travel Agent	97.7	48.4	49.3	70	21.6	-27.7
STM2	Hotel Mgt	72.2	40.5	31.7	75	34.5	2.8
STM3	Events Mgt	66.4	44.1				
STM4	Travel Agent	72.9	44.1	28.8	50	5.9	-22.9
CC1	Chef	35.4	32.1	3.3			
CC2	Pastry Cook	72.0	24.1	47.9	85	60.9	13.0
CC3	Pastry Cook	51.0	24.1	26.9	60	35.9	9.0
CC4	Hotel Mgt	53.8	40.5	13.3			
CC5	Chef	83.0	32.1	50.9			
CC6	Chef	74.3	32.1	42.2	75	42.9	0.7
CC7	Chef	82.7	32.1	50.6	80	47.9	-2.7
HS1	Wilderness Guide	77.2	44.1	33.1	65	20.9	-12.2
HS2	Hotel Mgt	86.8	40.5	46.3	80	39.5	-6.8
HS3	Bar Work	100.0	26.7	73.3	80	53.3	-20.0
HS4	Manager McDonalds	31.6	39.6	-8.0	70	30.4	38.4
HS5	Financial manager	51.5	73.1	-21.6	50	-23.1	-1.5

	Career Aspiration	Student Rating	ANU4	Difference	3rd I'view Rating	ANU4 Diff	1st v 3rd
SM1	Own Hotel/Café	71.5	40.5	31.0	50	9.5	-21.5
SM2	Restaurant Owner	53.7	39.6	14.1	65	25.4	11.3
HL1	Chef	25.5	32.1	-6.6			
HL2	Chef	79.0	32.1	46.9	75	42.9	-4.0
HL3	Hotel Mgt	61.1	40.5	20.6	55	14.5	-6.1
HL4	Adventure Guide	64.4	44.1	20.3	85	40.9	20.6
HL5	Bed & Breakfast Owner	90.6	40.5	50.1			
HL6	Waiter	75.4	36.4	39.0	80	43.6	4.6
HL7	Events Mgt	72.6	48.4	24.2	85	36.6	12.4
HL8	Barista*						
D1	Chef	63.6	32.1	31.5	75	42.9	11.4
D2	Chef	65.8	32.1	33.7	70	37.9	4.2
D3	Restaurant/Bar Owner	50.3	40.5	9.8			
D4	Waiter	59.6	36.4	23.2	70	33.6	10.4
D5	Chef	76.5	32.1	44.4	65	32.9	-11.5
D6	Bar Work	41.7	26.7	15.0	40	13.3	-1.7
D7	Waiter	53.6	36.4	17.2	95	58.6	41.4
D8	Chef	63.0	32.1	30.9	75	42.9	12.0
D9	Chef	86.8	32.1	54.7	100	67.9	13.3

Legend: Student occupational outcome at end of interview series

Working in hospitality	18
Undecided/Not Hosp	22
Missing	12
Institutional Catering	3
Still at school	6